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A survey in two Rural Systems
in South Karnataka**

Frédéric LANDY

March 1992

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

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This paper is one of the results of the Indo-French project "To Migrate or to Stay? Rural Change, Mobility and Retention of Rural Population in South India". As such, it supplements our P.P.S.S. n°5, dealing with the same field (J. Racine: *To Migrate or to Stay? Mobility and Retention of Rural Population in South India. A Field Survey of Villagers' Rationales in Mandya District, Karnataka*, 1990).

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"Your Highness, there pours out every year from most of our parishes, a prodigious number of people who, driven by misery and lack of bread, abandon their native place in order to become mercenaries in the lands of plenty. Spain, for example, takes many of them; others gain entry into various provinces of the Kingdom as masons, roofers or pit-sawyers. Admittedly they bring a little money back with them. But for ten of these workers or travellers who return, not even two meet with success. Sickneses, travelling-expenses and immorality swallow up all their earnings. And can the money which does eventually come back to our province make up for all the harm done by these people to the development of agriculture ?

Report presented by the inhabitants of St. Pardoux-la-Croisille (Limousin, France) to their intendant Turgot (1762), quoted by F. Braudel, *L'identité de la France*, Arthaud Flammarion, 1986, p.58.

These grievances are from a French province in the 18th century. It is a far cry from the Karnataka of 20th century India. Nevertheless, they describe a situation which prevails in quite a few contemporary third world countries: a considerable number of out-migrants, leaving the countryside to try their luck on more prosperous regions, then returning to their place of origin with pockets as empty as they were at the beginning, in a village whose local economy suffers on account of the out-migration.

Is the situation equally black today in the Maidan, in the heart of the Mysore plateau? We will see that the dry zones under study, undoubtedly deserted by "a prodigious number of people", benefit by the return of a large number of migrants, who partly make up for the number who have left. Moreover, the balance of these movements is not as negative as it was in Limousin; we can even assert that, acting as a safety valve, it actually enables a large number of people to remain in the countryside.

On the other hand, the irrigated zones of the region which benefit from migration seem to be, in certain aspects, negative pictures of the dry zones. The district of Mandya, situated in the heart of the flat

Deccan which is dented only by a few inselbergs and has a rather uniform semiarid climate with an average annual rainfall of 800 mm for 12.5° N of latitude, is yet full of contrasts, as a result of human action on the eco-system. Particularly important in this regard is the presence or lack of flow-irrigation provided by large dams, some of which are still in the construction stage, makes a striking difference between certain rural systems, even though they are adjacent to one another.

To compare these can prove revealing about the issue of migration because irrigation, by augmenting the harvest-yield and extending the period of agricultural work, and therefore also the need for labourers, very often induces in-migration, be it seasonal or permanent. The local inhabitants, enriched by irrigation, do not need to out-migrate in search of a livelihood. But in regions which remain dry, the incentive to out-migrate - either to these irrigated areas, or to cities in search of non-agricultural employment - is far greater.

In the following pages, we shall deal with the subject of migration by undertaking a comparative study between two rural systems, one irrigated, the other dry. But in order to avoid the trap of an *ex post* analysis which would explain only the causes of migration and not the alternative to it - to stay - a third part will be devoted to the study of a phenomenon that occurs even in areas of migration: a high percentage of the population remains in the native village. In 1981, 82.2% of the men and 58.8% of the women of the rural population of Karnataka were found to be still resident in their place of birth, while in the rural areas of the district of Mandya the corresponding percentages were 89.1% and 62.5 % respectively. In other words, the term "rural exodus" has never been more ill-suited to the reality of the region: the migrations never attain the scale of an exodus, and certainly, not all of them are directed towards the city.¹

MOTTAHALLI, AN IRRIGATED VILLAGE AND ITS IN-MIGRANTS

In 1932, the Maharaja of Mysore finally saw the completion of the large Krishnarajasagar dam on the Kaveri river which was the brain-

1. These lines were written after spending 11 months in the two villages under survey. I am especially grateful to my field assistant G.D. Ganesha for his invaluable help, and to the inhabitants of Mottahalli, Mayagonahalli and Naragalu for their kindness and their patience.

child of his *diwan* Vishveshvarayya². With this project a large portion of the district of Mandya came to be irrigated, and today a total of 72,160 hectares is irrigated by it. The water is not equally distributed because the lands up-stream receive more. Thus, the village of Mottahalli, located directly on the main Vishveshvarayya canal (map n°1), is irrigated throughout the year except in times of drought. This enables the cultivation of sugarcane — which is responsible for the relatively large scale of immigration to Mottahalli.³

An irrigated village

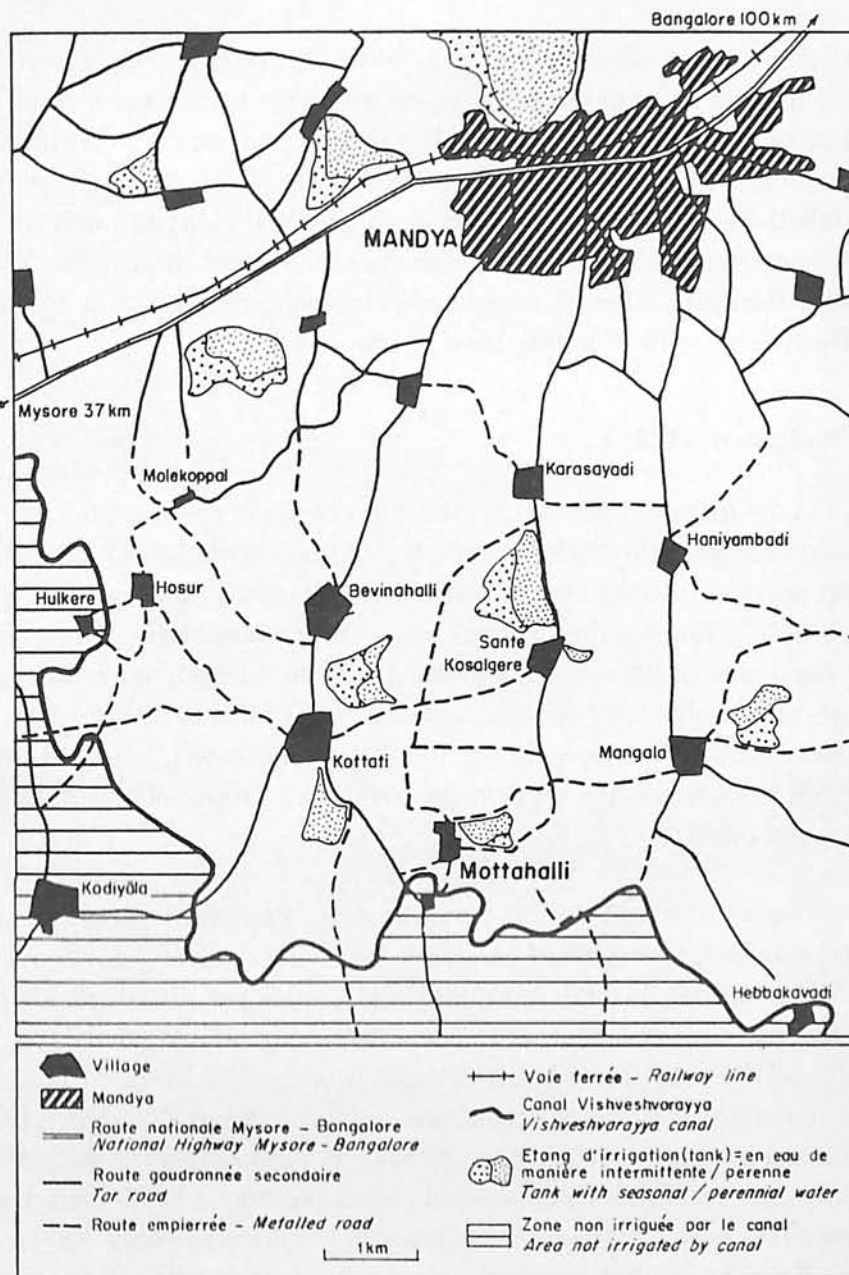
In the month of March, at the height of the dry season, the green of sugarcane or paddy fields contrasts strikingly with the ochre shades of the other cultivated lands located immediately to the south of the canal, only a few hundred metres away from Mottahalli: 74% of the cultivated area of the village is under irrigation. Sugarcane, which can be harvested only after one year, takes up 39% of this cultivated area in October, paddy 30% (less during the dry *karu* season), irrigated ragi only 5%. The remaining percentage covers dry crops such as millets, grams and oilseeds.

Thanks to irrigation this agriculture is intensive, with the better lands producing two crops of paddy per year with relatively good yields by Indian standards: often more than 25 quintals per acre of paddy or 40 tons per acre of sugarcane. With four acres of irrigated land, a family of five can (just about) manage to survive⁴. Irrigated land is never left fallow. And the agricultural calendar shows that there is no off-season during the year, although May and December are generally slack (graph 1). Although agricultural work provides 65,000 man-days of work per year (including family labour), it amounts to only 100 days of work per capita, but during the peak season, particularly during the months of July-November, the local workforce is not sufficient to meet the demand for labour. During the year, sugarcane provide 56% of the man-days of labour, 67% if one includes employment in the 26 sugarcane crushers (*alemane*) established at Mottahalli where the cane juice is then boiled, and later, being cooled becomes jaggery (*bela*) — the local term for unrefined sugar (*gur*).

2. This study of Mottahalli is a revised version of a paper recently published in French: "Migrations de population et enracinement dans un village irriguée de l'Inde du sud: Mottahalli", *Cahiers d'Outre-Mer*, Bordeaux, avril-juin 1991, n° 174, pp. 129-166.

3. The names of villages are authentic (they can be identified easily from the maps) but the names of persons are fictitious.

4. The average size of landholdings is about 4 acres (1.5 ha).



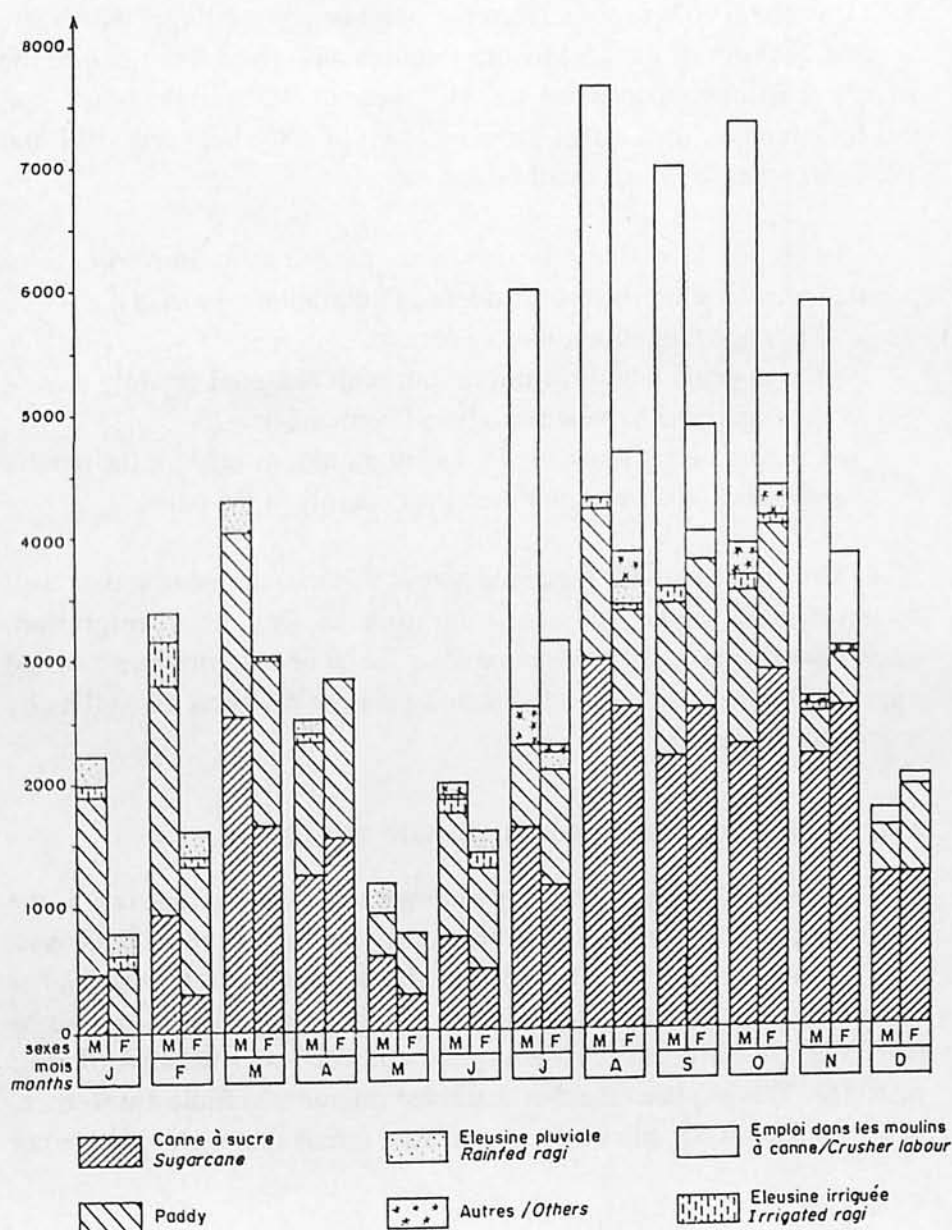
Map n° 1: Mottahalli - Location map

The jaggery is auctioned off in the "regulated market" at Mandya, the district headquarters, a city of 121,000 inhabitants in 1991 whose principal source of income is the sugarcane. Mandya also has a sugar factory which represents another possible outlet for the sugarcane producers. It is more reliable than the crushers, because sugarcane is bought here at rates which have been fixed before the time of planting. Mandya is 9 kms away from Mottahalli and linked to it by 31 buses a day (all jam-packed) — a distance great enough to have prevented the village from becoming a mere "dormitory suburb" inhabited by commuters, but not to preclude all urban influence and a great

accessibility (if only to the cinema — an essential part of modern Indian life, whether in town or countryside).

Mottahalli has certain services like a credit cooperative (PACS) and a middle school. But the village population is composed mainly of farmers, whose economic vocation is reinforced by the local caste structure. 70% of the inhabitants belong to the dominant Vokkaliga caste which is economically and numerically stronger than the others

jours de travail disponibles
available workdays



Graph 1: Calendar of agricultural work per month and sexwise in Mottahalli

(Family labour as well as wage labour are included)

since it possesses 92.5% of the cultivated land. This is basically a caste of farmers (which is what the name signifies in Kannada), which M.N. Srinivas (1976) invariably refers to as "Peasant". The *dharma* of a Vokkaliga depicts him as an agriculturist par excellence and even if he does not have any field of his own, a rural Vokkaliga will attempt to till the land, either as a tenant (although tenancy is prohibited by the land reform of 1974), or even as an agricultural labourer. Here is a strong factor in retaining the village population. A priori, the Vokkaliga is not interested in economic diversification nor in leaving for the city, and the development of irrigation has only reinforced this. In contrast, T.S. Epstein (1962) reports from the neighbouring village, which she studied, that out of the 15 Muslim families who lived there before the advent of irrigation, only one was still there in 1955; all the others had left for Mandya, then a fast-growing town (+ 58% between 1951 and 1961), in order to set up small businesses.

Even so, Mottahalli is the focus of different movements of population indicating shifts of residence ("migrations") such as:

- Marriage migrations, mainly female;
- Large-scale labour in-migration, both seasonal (mainly during the sugarcane harvest period) and permanent;
- Comparatively small-scale out-migration, mostly for the pursuit of higher studies or qualified jobs, mainly in the cities.

Thus at Mottahalli we come across instances of seasonal as well as permanent migrations; out-migration as well as in-migration; migrations due primarily to economic or social or religious reasons; and migrations undertaken by uneducated landless peasants as well as by university graduates.

Marriage, the main factor in female migration

We often have the tendency to forget that in India, marriage is the factor responsible for most migrations. According to the 1981 census, 28.3% (and this is rather a lot) of the rural population of Karnataka has migrated since 1971, but in 48.4% of these cases, it was due to marriage: 67.5% of all female migrants moved away because of their marriage. This explains the fact that most migrants in India are women. In South Karnataka, the virilocal structure forces the bride to leave her

parents' home and move to stay with her husband, often in a different village altogether.⁵

However in South India, the ideal marriage is often between close relatives. That is why (F. Pesneaud, 1984) matrimonial migrations are generally not to any great distance, compared to North India where marriages rarely take place between relatives. Mottahalli serves as a good illustration.

The founders of the village, the Vokkaligas, make marriages that are more deeply rooted to the soil than the others, who have all immigrated at some time. However, those other castes who are a priori less well-entrenched than the Vokkaligas, marry more often within the village community, perhaps because being in the minority and less well-integrated they show more solidarity and self-sufficiency.

If we now consider the map of marriages (map 2), we find that proximity is a very important factor. But the area around Mottahalli is far from homogenous, for several very nearby villages are bypassed in favour of others. This unequal distribution is highlighted by a circular migratory movement that could be termed "matrimonial barter". It consists of marrying a young girl into the village of her mother, often to her maternal uncle. As a Kannada saying (quoted by M.N. Srinivas, 1976, p. 260) politely puts it: "The calf has to be brought back from the place where the cow has been given".

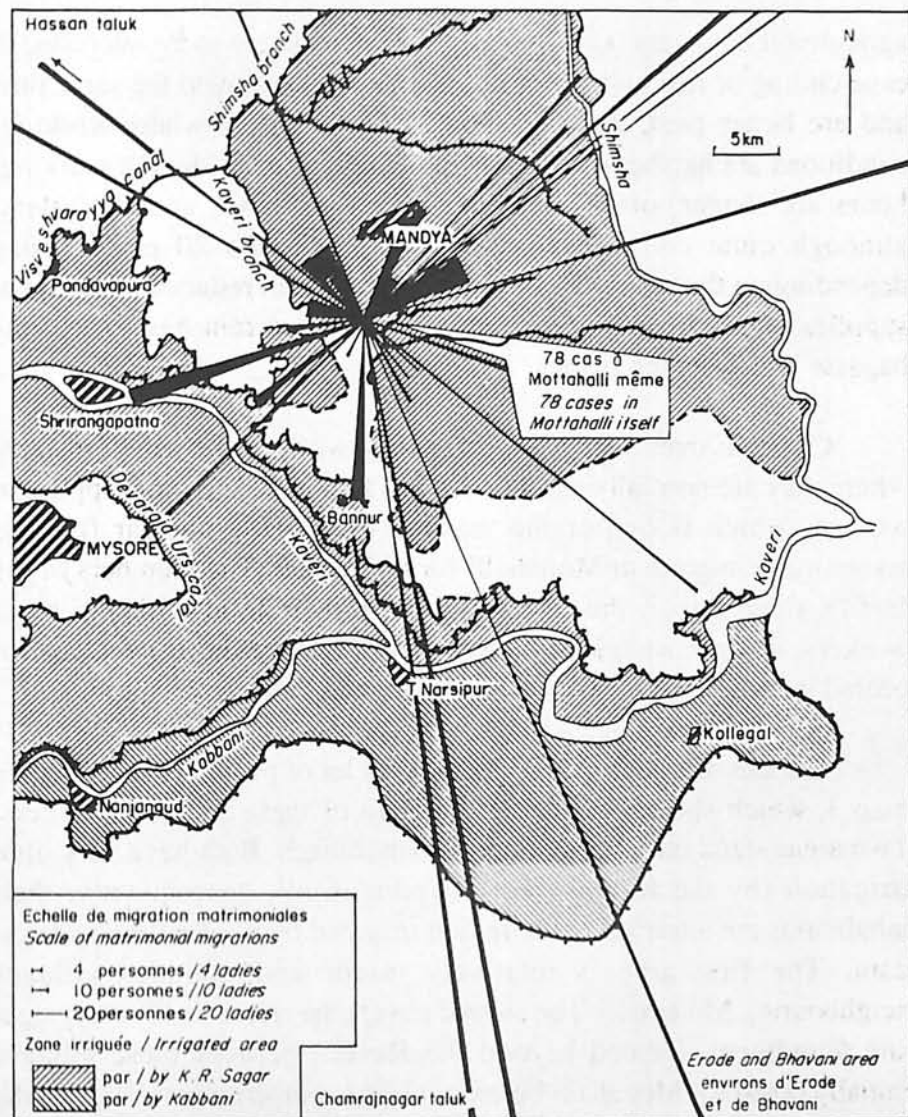
If marriage is responsible for female migration, it is also, due to the principle of virilocality, equally effective in keeping men in the village. Much importance is given to agnatic alliances through direct relations : it is not so among the Kammas of Andhra Pradesh (M.S.A. Rao (ed), 1986) nor in Madagascar (J.P. Raison, 1986), where it is the groom who comes to live with the in-laws. In Karnataka, the land remains in the family of the groom. The land is passed down the ancestral line; it is in one's blood.

Marriage can however act as a catalyst as far as male migrations are concerned : there have been several instances of seasonal or permanent in-migrants going to join in-laws living in Mottahalli who were in a position to help them.

5. It is very rare for the groom to go and live in the village of his in-laws, unless they do not have any son of their own or happen to possess a lot of land, while his parents do not. Moreover, popular village opinion considers such an act "unmanly".

Table 1 - Mottahalli: Birth-place of wives and marriage place of daughters.

Caste	in Mottahalli	within a radius of 5 kms (excluding Mottahalli)	beyond 5 kms
Vokkaliga lineage : Tundageriamma Borappa others (generally migrants)	25 % 31 % 40 %	38 % 43 % 30 %	37 % 26 % 30 %
Harijan	41 %	5 %	54 %
Vodda (stone-cutters)	31 %	15 %	54 %
Achari (blacksmiths, carpenters)	13 %	0 %	87 %



Map n°2: Marriage migration of Mottahalli: birth place of wives and marriage place of daughters of Mottahalli inhabitants

Seasonal in-migration - free or bonded?

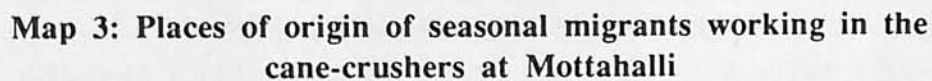
The agricultural calendar shows a peak season with a high demand for labourers during the months of July-November. This is the time when the sugarcane is processed to make jaggery. The demand was such that it had already begun to attract seasonal workers even before the cane-crushers were first equipped with electric motors in the early 1960's. Today, there are no less than 28 crushers at Mottahalli, each requiring a team of 6 to 8 workers, 196 labourers altogether, during the 1989 season (there is a system of rotation between teams and individuals). Apart from 5 workers belonging to the local population, all the rest were seasonal immigrants. As a matter of fact, the

agricultural labourers (*kuli*, coolies) of Mottahalli are more interested in cane cutting or rice cultivation, which take place around the same time and are better paid, than in labour in the crushers where working-conditions are harsher due to the oppressive heat inside, the working-hours are longer, often commencing before dawn, and the salary, although quite considerable in theory (up to Rs 20 per full day depending on the tonnage produced), is very often reduced by irregular supplies of sugarcane or electricity, or because rain has soaked the bagasse which serves as fuel.

Children over 12 years of age may work in the cane-crushers, where they are normally asked to tend to the fires. The same applies to women, which is one of the reasons why whole nuclear families sometimes emigrate to Mottahalli for the season. The members of the family sleep out in the open, and cook their food with the other workers, while nostalgically remembering those who have remained behind in the village in order to look after the family land and cattle.

The fact that such a job still attracts a lot of people is explained by map 3, which shows the places of origin of these seasonal workers. Two areas stand out as important labour-sources. Both have very little irrigation (by the Kabini river) or none at all; consequently, their inhabitants are attracted to the region irrigated by the Krishnarajasagar dam. The first area is relatively minor and includes villages neighbouring Mottahalli. The second covers the taluks of Chamrajnagar and Gundlupet, located beyond the Kaveri: perhaps these villages initially opted for Mottahalli because it is the southernmost village in the irrigated area and therefore the closest. But in fact, it is the "arbitrary" nature of such long-established migratory channels that is striking — started long ago perhaps through a relative, a friend, an acquaintance or some chance contact which acted as a catalyst for one or two pioneers who migrated, thereby paving the way for many others.

There are no out-migrations towards Mottahalli from the region between these two areas. This region, bordering the Kaveri, profits from canal irrigation, which although not as copious as that of the village, is nonetheless sufficient to produce a good paddy crop, which is harvested just during the jaggery season at Mottahalli. From the northern region marked in the map there is practically no seasonal migration although it is not irrigated. This might lead us to believe that the emigrants from this region prefer to migrate to villages nearer to them, north of Mandya taluk; but as we shall see below, many villages of this region ignore the sugar-producing area around Mandya even though it is very close to them. This is yet another example of the



A good migratory example would be that of a group of villages situated around Kuderu in the taluk of Chamrajnagar which sent no less than 58 workers to Mottahalli in 1989. We have found there two hamlets situated at a distance of only 500 m away from one another:

both lack irrigation; both have to make do with such poor crops as jowar and ragi; both are composed solely of members of the Uppaliga Shetty caste. One village has no seasonal migration, either to Mottahalli or anywhere else: the villagers make a living out of twisting agave ropes. The other hamlet on the contrary has few rope makers because most of the people out-migrate, all of them without fail to Mottahalli. The absence of irrigation therefore represents one reason for out-migration, but it is far from being a cause in itself.

One look at the poor lands is enough to make it clear why the men abandon this village at the end of June every year, even though it is time for the cultivation of dry crops⁶. The productivity and the labour requirements are so low that they feel no qualms about letting the entire harvest go from bad to worse in order to go and make jaggery at Mottahalli. In fact, most of the money the migrants earn goes on buying food, bidis and tea, not to mention alcohol; while the amount that is brought home to the village (around Rs 200 or Rs 300 monthly) is barely enough to meet the family's expenses for a few weeks at the most. But the yields from their own lands are far too meagre and unreliable to justify foregoing a migration which is forced on them by the simple *need to survive*. Besides, the working hours at the crushers are sufficiently flexible to allow the in-migrants to return to their own village for a few days at a time, especially when there are important things to take care of, such as the silk-worm sale if they are engaged in mulberry cultivation.

Apart from this, do these seasonal workers really have any choice? As a matter of fact, most of these migrations can be termed "forced migrations", even though on as subdued note. The fact is that in the previous year almost all the coolies employed have taken advance money from the crusher owner - in certain cases more than Rs 1000, through the intermediary of a middleman from their village (who is generally as dependent as the others). Most of the time, the workers did not wish or could not afford to have the money deducted from their wages, and the following season they are obliged to return to Mottahalli in order to clear their debts. Or sometimes, even if the debts have been cleared and the money paid back, they have been obliged to incur new ones due to lack of food-grains during summer — thereby strengthening their bonds. Admittedly this money is advanced interest-free: since the usual rate of interest amounts to a minimum of 2 to 3 % per month in this region, this is a powerful incentive. It is indeed the

⁶. In the coffee plantation areas of the Ghats, on the contrary, the agricultural off-season in the native place of the seasonal workers coincides with the period when coffee plucking is on (December-March).

main reason why seasonal workers flock to Mottahalli. But this actually forms a toned-down version of "bonded labour", which has been legally prohibited since 1976. In the words of a Shetty who has come to work in the crushers at Mottahalli with his three sons: "I have to keep working for this crusher till the day I die. If I don't come back here, they will tie a rope around my neck and drag me here".

If the agriculture at Mottahalli is "capitalist" in the true sense of the word, it is because it uses a lot of capital. But instead of corresponding to a "modern" agriculture, a part of this capital consists mostly of this money given in advance to the workers. It immobilises funds, but the employer is assured of labour, and the salary he pays is relatively low compared with the high demand for workers. (Agricultural wages on the other hand are higher or equal to those paid in the non-irrigated parts of the district). This exploitation of the seasonal workers is somewhat similar to what has been described by J. Breman (1978) as "*crushing of cane and of labour*". In fact, it corresponds to the use of a poorer region subject to out-migration, by an irrigated region with in-migration: a pre-capitalist peasant mode of production is articulated with a capitalist mode of production (C.D. Scott, in J. Harriss (ed), 1982). Despite the transformation brought about by the "Green Revolution", agriculture at Mottahalli, far from generating a "modern" wage labour system, has actually, thanks to migration, perpetuated the traditional form of employment in India, where the price the worker pays for security is loss of freedom.

This mode of production, which segments the migrant labour market socially (by the advances) as well as geographically (by the supremacy of one or two villages in the supply of labour) also involves permanent migrations which are bred by the lure of the prosperity brought about by irrigation.

A pool of cheap labour: permanent in-migration

Every village is a product of migration. Mottahalli is no exception. Its founders are Vokkaligas belonging to the Tundageramma lineage. They settled in this place several centuries ago, although the exact date is not known.

The legend of the village's origin is largely inter-woven with migration: long ago lived in Andhra Pradesh the highly-gifted and exceedingly beautiful goddess Tundageramma. One day, a raja came to ask for her hand in marriage. Although he was of a lower caste, he had might in his favour. So she pretended to consider his proposal, and invited him and the royal family to her house on the pretext of

arranging the marriage, but in fact with the intention of killing her suitor. Her trick was successful. The act accomplished, she was forced to flee with her entire family as the members of the king's retinue were hot on her heels. But she suddenly found her passage blocked by the mighty Godavari river. She began to pray in earnest and lo, the waters parted, allowing her to pass through, and closing over the king's men who attempted to follow her. Tundageramma was saved. Later, she settled at Belakavadi, not far from Bangalore. It was from Belakavadi that the descendants of Tundageramma founded Mottahalli.⁷

It is a fact that myths and religion do play a role in fostering migration, but to a lesser extent than economic factors. At the caste-level, for instance: the Harijan clan of Hucharasayama lived formerly in the village of Lalankere, 3 kms away from Mottahalli. But by their "immoral" behaviour (they did not bathe or respect the sacred rites) the Hucharasayamas incurred the wrath of the village deity, who cursed them, so that all the newly-born babies in the village died. The Hucharasayamas were forced to flee to Mottahalli, but they did not abandon their properties in Lalankere. Since the powers of the deity were confined to the village, in Mottahalli they were free from its wrath.

However, most permanent migrations to Mottahalli are due to economic reasons, since Mottahalli is an irrigated region and the chances of finding agricultural employment are higher there. A day-labourer in Mottahalli can rely upon more than 150 days of work each year, with the possibility of earning up to Rs 2500. This is enough to attract some peasants from non-irrigated areas; if they have only 1 ha of dry land there, it would bring them in less than what a landless labourer can earn at Mottahalli.

The heads of family of 28% of the households in Mottahalli have come from outside the village; if we include families whose heads no longer alive, 33% were born outside Mottahalli. Among these, only 30% were living in the village itself; the others live a bit farther, in a place equipped by the local authorities in 1977 and appropriately named "Colony of Poverty" (*Garibi Colony*). These landless migrants were provided plots of land free of cost so that they could at least have a home of their own. The people who live in this quarter on the far side of the canal, 500 m away from the main settlement, are excluded socially as well as geographically. This neighbourhood, where gambling, adultery and alcohol are very much a part of life, is shunned

7. This explains why certain places of pilgrimage are so important for each lineage. While the Tundageriammas religiously visit Belakavadi every year, the Borappas make their way to Pihalli, 5 kms away from Mottahalli. In this way the various lineages maintain their links with their origins.

by the land-owners of Mottahalli. The same is true of two other similar housing colonies on the outskirts of the village, built on a land where dry crops were cultivated 40 years ago. One of them is inhabited by the Achari caste, carpenters and blacksmiths by profession, who were attracted to Mottahalli around 1945 by the lack of such craftsmen here while their own villages nearby already had a surfeit of them. But today, there are eight families staying here, and many of the male members have to work as farm-hands.

On the other hand, the Government had another colony built in 1975 as an extension of the traditional Harijan quarters, in order to ease the population pressure. On these lands which were also provided free, live the two Harijan lineages of Mottahalli. The first one is native to the place and even possesses some irrigated lands, as it is descended from the *donne* (village watchman) to whom these lands were once allotted. The second is the Hucharasayama clan whose non-native background has already been described.

All these three locations are situated on the outskirts of the original settlement, on the borders of the village as delimited in 1932 (the date marked on the most recent land survey map) — its geographical fringe, but also the social fringe because they are isolated from the mainstream of rural society.



Eighty-five percent of the permanent in-migrants do not possess any land. Those who did own some in their native village either left it in the care of relatives, or in some cases even sold it. Moreover, the price of land at Mottahalli (Rs 250,000 per irrigated hectare) puts it beyond

the reach of these labourers. Thus it is primarily because of in-migration that no less than 29% of the inhabitants of Mottahalli are landless. On the other hand, the few small land-owners who are listed among the in-migrants (15%) are not wealthy enough to avoid having to work as day-labourers for several weeks in the year to supplement their regular income. In fact, the socio-economic hierarchy in the village corresponds largely to the length of settlement there. So much so, that even the fact of belonging to a low caste seems to be mitigated if the family has lived in the village for a very long time — at least as far as social standing is concerned, though not from the standpoint of ritual purity.

Table 2: Percentage of landless households in Mottahalli, caste-wise.

	Percentage of landless households
Vokkaliga Tundageriamma lineage Founders of the village	8 %
Vokkaliga Borappa (arrived later)	5 %
Other Vokkaligas most of them recent in-migrants	39 %
Mahalakshmi Harijan lineage settled down long ago	19 %
Other Harijans	50 %
Lingayats (higher caste but recent in-migrants)	83 %
Voddas (all recent in-migrants)	100 %

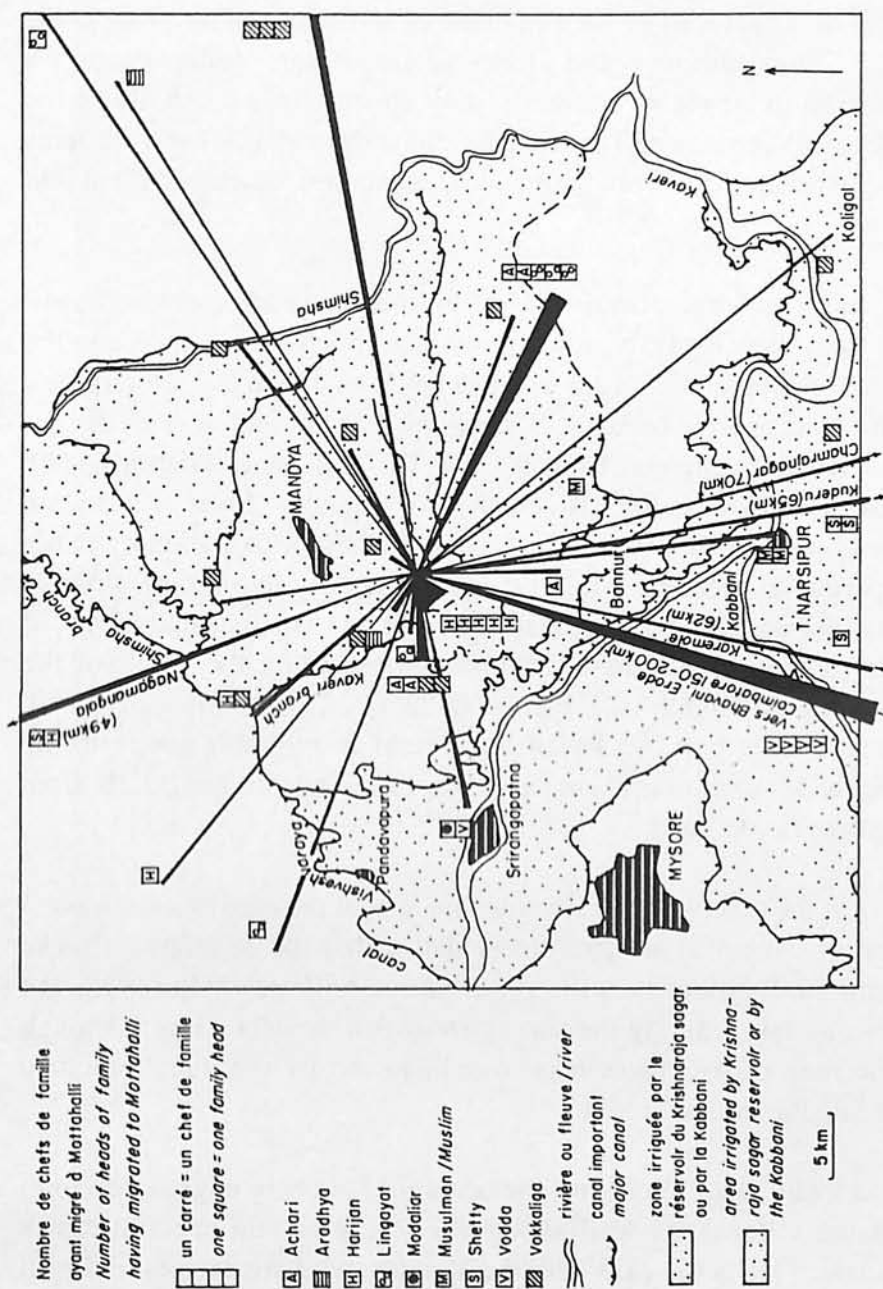
Thus, for example, one Harijan joint family of 15 members owns half a hectare of irrigated land and two she-buffaloes, and has constructed a large house with a tiled roof. They could do all this because there were six wage-earning labourers in the household (and as they used their own yoke while tilling, each daily wage amounted to Rs 25 instead of the usual Rs 10). The eldest son, Honeiah, has just obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree. Since these Harijans have been in the village for generations, they have some land of their own. In a sense, are they not better-off than a Vokkaliga in the Garibi Colony who, although he belongs to a higher caste, has no property, no plough, and no degree to his credit ? Let us be clear: of course a Harijan

remains a Harijan, and will always be at the bottom of the caste hierarchy; but a wealthy land-owner would behave just as haughtily towards a landless Vokkaliga as he would towards a Honeiah. Hence, we often find that even though a person may belong to a low caste, his low status is balanced by the early date of settlement of his caste in the village. Thus although the stone-cutters of the Vodda caste are considered to be socially inferior, they are certainly much above the Harijans in their native Tamil Nadu; but in Mottahalli, even Harijans refuse to accept food from their hands! Migration has turned them into pariahs.

In general, apart from the Harijan lineage already mentioned, and apart from the Lingayats, who are usually called upon to serve in the temples of Mottahalli but are not paid any actual salary, the migrations are due to economic reasons. "Employment is the soul of population", wrote Arthur Young way back in 1774. This statement is confirmed by map 4, which shows the native places of migrants. Most of these are either non-irrigated or poorly irrigated villages. Although there is not one particular area that could be said to send more migrants than the others, we do find that this map, like the one on seasonal migrants, seems to provide additional information regarding the whole of the district of Mandya. As a matter of fact, in the district of which Mottahalli is a part, 43.4% of male rural in-migrants are from the district of Mysore (to the south and west of Mottahalli) and 32.2% from Bangalore (to the east).

On the other hand, if we compare it with the map of matrimonial migrations (map 2) we find no evidence that the in-migrants make matrimonial alliances with their native villages. However, the interviews taken during the survey show that there is a link, although on the map of marriages it is overshadowed by the numerous data regarding the local villagers.

Finally, map 4 confirms the occurrence of chain migrations (from the same village), as well as regions where certain specific castes originate. This is the case with the Voddas, who are natives of Tamil Nadu, although their ancestors came from Andhra Pradesh (C. Bhat, 1984). They were traditionally stone-cutters and well-diggers, and the first time they came to this region was during the digging of the Vishveshvarayya canal, when they were engaged on a contract basis by some contractors. While on the job they developed various contacts, and when work on the canal came to an end several Voddas remained in the area. Others who returned to Tamil Nadu, spoke to their family and



Map n° 4: Birth places of in-migrant heads of household definitively settled in
Mottahalli

(the number of migrants is proportional to the base of the arrows and not their volume)

friends about the potentialities of the region. Today, the whole of southern Karnataka is dotted with miserable huts which have sprung up alongside the villages: they shelter members of this same Vodka caste — migrants still.

In fact, how long do the eight Vodka households in the Garibi Colony intend to stay there ? The Voddas live at the periphery of the colony, on the side of the road. They are constantly threatened with eviction, since they encroach partly on lands non allotted to them. However they are not so poor: although they are in-migrants, socially down-trodden, looked down upon even by Harijans, economically they are skilled workers. They earn Rs 25 to 30 per day on construction sites which are sometimes situated more than 10 kilometres away from the village so that they are often obliged to stay away for days at a time.

In any case, we find that chance plays no role in their decision to settle at Mottahalli. Migration, far from being a complete wrench followed by a hazardous wandering, takes place only after certain precautionary measures have been taken and risks cut down to a minimum. Thus most permanent migrations are preceded by seasonal migrations, undertaken either individually or in a group, which test the ground beforehand. Then, when things seem secure enough for a permanent settlement, the head of the household may summon the rest of his nuclear family to join him in Mottahalli.

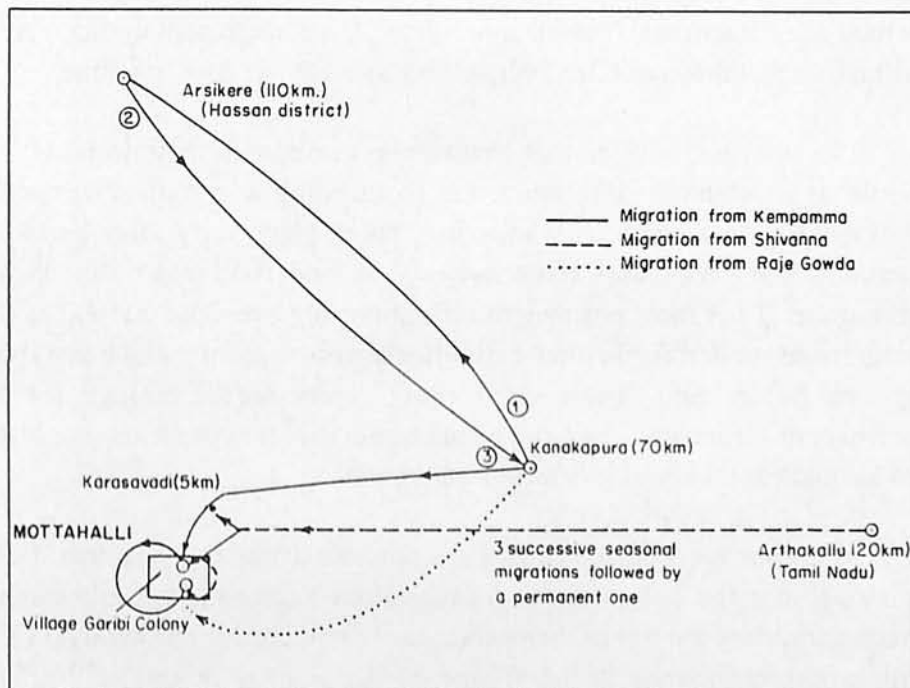
Of course economic causes are powerful motivating factors, but they are not the sole reason. As has often been asserted, although necessary, they are not in themselves sufficient cause. The catalyst for migration might arise in the village itself due to some quarrel in the family, the presence of a bossy father or grabbing brothers. But more often it is the enthusiastic description of a friend, a relative or an acquaintance already living outside, that helps decide the would-be migrant. He is reassured by their promises of a job and lodging, as well as all the material and emotional support they can give, at least during the first few months of his stay, until he has had the time to adapt himself to his new surroundings.

In Mottahalli:

- 31% of the in-migrants had been invited by their agnatic relatives already staying there;
- 31% came there through their in-laws, since their wives were born at Mottahalli;
- 15% (including the Voddas) came on a contract basis, engaged in their own native place through a middleman;

- 11% came through friends;
- 12% came through other sources.

In the majority of cases, these are chain migrations where chance plays practically no role at all. It would be also appropriate to underline the importance of the "big" land owners of Mottahalli (those with more than 2 ha of irrigated land), who are primarily responsible for channelling these migration flows. It is they who lure the migrant, by promising him a hut built on their land, or a temporary lodging in their cane-crusher or even in their home, or at least below their verandah. Most important, like the seasonal crusher workers, these people are also



Graph n° 2: The role of matrimonial relationships in chain migrations

Kempamma, a Vokkaliga, was born in a village near Kanakapura. She married Nanje Gowda and went to live with him in Arsikere, where she had a son. One fine day Nanje Gowda disappeared (black magic according to her, a simple case of adultery according to others). She therefore returned to her parents' home in Kanakapura, where she passed a year working as an agricultural labourer.

Her mother's brother, Shivanna, lived with 2 other brothers in Arthakallu (Tamil Nadu) farming a dry piece of land of only 2.4 ha. As the income from it was too low, he came to Karasavadi, and to the neighbouring village of Mottahalli where his father-in-law lived over 3 successive years during the jaggery season. Then, the distance to travel every year being too great, he decided to settle down permanently in Mottahalli, to work in the sugar mills and as an agricultural labourer.

He then invited his niece, Kempamma, to come with her child to Mottahalli. He took upon himself the responsibility of finding her a job in a sugar mill during the jaggery season. This was done. She even succeeded, like Shivanna, in obtaining a piece of land in the Slum Colony. Kempamma, in her turn, advised a relative, Raje, of Kanakapura, to leave his village, where he did not own any land, to come to Mottahalli. Raje came away all the more easily, as he could count on the help of his wife's brother, who also lived in Mottahalli...

offered around Rs 500 advance money in order to ensure their services during the peak season. Sometimes the in-migrant attaches himself wholly to one employer and becomes a permanent servant in his farm. In that case, the advance exceeds Rs 1000 but he has to toil every day, from before dawn until after dusk. In return, he gets a daily wage of Rs 6 but is provided with three meals a day. This paternalistic insurance is the price to be paid for protection against under-employment and possible accidents. Immigration at Mottahalli is coupled with clientelism.

Such a relationship linking the labourer to a creditor-patron does not encourage return migrations. But it is anyway difficult to judge how important it really is. In certain cases, nostalgia grips a brother or a father of the family, who then returns to his native village. But most of the migrants left home only 20 or 30 years ago when they were relatively young, and even today they are still capable of working. Does this mean we are going to witness "retirement migrations" in a few years from now? It is too early to say. It would seem that the migrant, when leaving his native village, either sells off or gives away his lands (if he possesses any) to his relatives who remain in the village. It would be difficult for him to get them back at a later date; and this, coupled with the fact that in Mottahalli he does not earn enough, restricts the number who return to their villages. Moreover, because of the Garibi Colony, we can assume that most of the non-seasonal migrants will decide to remain in Mottahalli: now they have a house of their own, which they do not intend to dispose of under any circumstances.

If the actual number of returns are limited, there are few new arrivals. These have been dwindling over the last ten years for a variety of reasons. Firstly, no new lands have come under irrigation, apart from a few recently-constructed wells covering only a very small area; so there is no extra demand for labour. Secondly, the demographic growth of the village (+182% between 1951 and 1981 if we add natural growth to migratory balance) goes against in-migration. Finally, practically all the sites in the Garibi Colony seem to be occupied: the prospect of being allotted a plot of land by the local administration was one of the factors responsible for in-migration.

Hence the present group of seasonal workers has little prospect of ever settling at Mottahalli. But it would not do to assume that all seasonal workers are potential permanent migrants. Many of them have been coming to Mottahalli regularly for many years to work for four months in the crushers, but have never settled there, while others have already lived there for a long time. The seasonal worker is distinguished

from the permanent in-migrant by three sets of characteristics. The first is connected with the situation in his native village : whether there is any landed property, and if so the size of it; the number of excess labourers in the household; or the good or bad relations among the various members of the family could well be legitimate reasons determining the nature of the migration (permanent or otherwise). The second characteristic is related to the target-destination : the nature of the relationship with the locals, job and lodging guarantee, etc. The third characteristic is much more debatable, as it concerns the distance between Mottahalli and the native village: is there a particular distance which forms a threshold, beyond which one refuses to make the often troublesome and expensive journey to Mottahalli every year? A comparison between the seasonal migration map and the permanent migration map reveals that, with the exception of the Voddas who are a category unto themselves, the native villages of permanent migrants are not situated further away than those of the seasonal migrants. The first two characteristics mentioned are undoubtedly more important than the distance covered. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that those interviewed rarely provide answers which correspond to the actuality... primarily because they themselves are not always aware of the true reasons for their migration.

On the whole, it would not do to attribute difficult circumstances in the native village as the sole cause for migration. It must be remembered that if these non-irrigated regions experience a "push" phenomenon, the villages irrigated by the Krishnarajasagar dam also provide a certain "pull". And one could even go to the extent of saying that the pull is far stronger than the push. Some marginal farmers have chosen to sell their dry land, the only asset they own, in order to settle in Mottahalli as simple day-labourers. It is an enormous risk to take, one that the agricultural labourers of Mottahalli would never take in the opposite direction. This explains why there is so little out-migration from Mottahalli, even on the part of those who, with their offspring as their only assets, constitute a "proletariat".

Emigration from Mottahalli: a minor phenomenon

More than two thousands inhabitants is a heavy anthropic burden for only 191 ha of irrigated land. Before the coming of irrigation, the agricultural labourers and small farmers traditionally went to work during the slack-season on coffee plantations in the Ghats, or even to the construction sites of large dams. But by 1950 this trend had disappeared altogether: today an illiterate coolie earning Rs 2,500 per annum cannot hope to get more than this pittance, however miserable,

in any other village. And if he cannot get any employment at Mottahalli during the off-season, where else would he go? This village is among the most irrigated in the whole of Karnataka. Should he go to the city then? Mandya, the nearest, has very few job opportunities as it is a "rural town" whose economy is based on sugarcane production (B.S. Bhooshan, 1984). Maybe he could try some other city situated further away? The answers are: "How to go? Life out there is very expensive and I have no skill, I know no trade, I have never been to school in my life..." Some of these explanations would undoubtedly be a source of amusement to other farmers of the Maidan whose acquaintance we shall make in the following pages. But they cannot be waved aside either, especially if we add to them the fact that there is no traditional secure migratory flow between Mottahalli and any town. Nobody, except in extreme cases, is prepared to give up the reality for the shadow. The urban mirage has no meaning for the poor peasant without any qualification.

But it is a different story altogether for those socio-economic classes who are privileged by the possession of land, income or education. Once in a while, they do consider migration, but it is always to the cities⁸. This is the case with two categories of villagers who have evolved a family strategy taking education as a path to development. Under the first category, we have certain wealthy land-owners who send all their children, including their daughters, to school. That is the reason why the dominant Vokkaliga Tundageramma lineage, which constitutes 36% of the population of Mottahalli, are holders of 50% of the diplomas superior or equal to S.S.L.C. The group falling into the second category is that of the Harijans, who first take advantage of the educational facilities provided for them by the Government, and later of the reservationist policy which procures seats for them in various universities and hostels.

However, these educated youths remain in the village, as it is possible to pursue studies at least to graduate level in Mandya, which is easily accessible by bus. It is only later, when the time for reaping the dividends of this education comes and they feel that this can only be done in urban surroundings, that they leave for the city (Mottahalli has practically no economic diversification). So, for example, one young Modaliar, a Tamil migrant who works as an accountant in a factory located in the suburbs of Bangalore, returns to Mottahalli only once in a month in order to see his mother, who lives alone, and care for her needs. Diploma for diploma, this phenomenon varies according to the

8. In India, on average, rural-urban migrations are more skilled than rural-rural ones. (B. Dasgupta, 1976).

caste: the Vokkaligas migrate less than the others. There are three reasons for this. Firstly, the Vokkaligas own more land than the average farmer, and it seems more worthwhile for even a P.U.C. to remain at home, since he can apply his knowledge in improving agricultural production, which is growing more and more commercial and dependant on technical know-how. Furthermore, if one has contacts in political and urban circles, it helps. Secondly the importance of landed property enables certain young people who are not very enterprising to remain in the village, ostensibly to supervise agriculture but in reality to lead the life of a "daddy's boy". And last, as we have already seen, the mental characteristics of each caste make the Vokkaligas primarily farmers. The bonds that bind them to land are not only economic, but also sentimental and religious. This is not so with the other castes, who are much more prone to diversification and therefore more willing to try their luck in the city. This holds good especially if the potential migrant happens to be the son of an immigrant, or if he belongs to the Harijan caste, which is in any case shunned by the village, so that he therefore has little to lose by trying to eke out a living in (very relative) urban anonymity.

Mottahalli thus has a largely positive migratory balance. The local rural economy is largely dependant on in-migration. The people who benefit most from this are the employers and owners of irrigated land, who are thus supplied with cheap labour. But the coolie is also able to make a living out of it, as it provides him with an income that is far superior to what other agricultural labourers in the non-irrigated regions receive. Of course, in such a system it is impossible for the migrants to become rich, just as it is impossible to succeed in a short time in arriving at an equilibrium between the native region and the target region, as the optimistic model of Lewis (1961) seems to propose. Are the migrants exploited? Of course they are. But they migrate all the same.

MAYAGONAHALLI AND NARAGALU: MIGRATION TO THE CITY

When we leave Mottahalli and its canal, a few kilometres to the north-west of Mandya, we come across a region which appears especially arid from February to April, since there is a total absence of canal irrigation. Even though an irrigation project is planned for the near future, harnessing the waters of the Hemavati river, this project (as indicated by map 5) will not provide any irrigation beyond the small town of Nagamangala (14 000 habitants). The villages of Mayagonahalli (570 habitants) and Naragalu (547 habitants), situated 11 kms away from the town, will continue to be dry.⁹

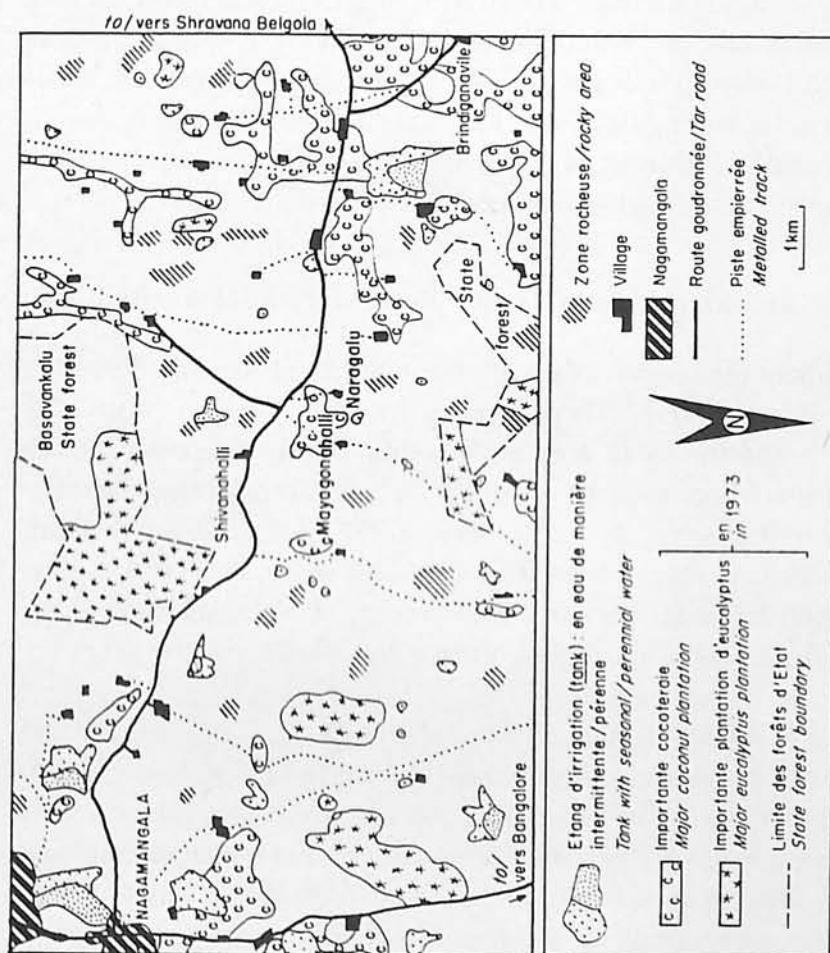
Need for an extra income to supplement rainfed agriculture

Without the support of canal irrigation, the farmers are forced to rely solely on rainfall. There is even less here than in Mottahalli (751 mm); and the small tank at Naragalu, poorly irrigating a mere 7 acres, cannot hope to make up for the climatic irregularities: the inter-annual variability exceeds 25%, as in the African Sahel (M. Petit, 1988). And this, when the population density in the two villages is as high as 168 habitants per km².¹⁰ Moreover, at Naragalu, half of the land is non-cultivable due to the presence of a granitic inselberg.

The bi-modal rainfall calendar shows two maxima in May and October: this is sufficient for one crop of jowar (*jola*, *Sorghum vulgare*) followed by one crop of horse-gram (*huruli*, *Dolichos biflorus*). This crop succession covers 10% of the cultivated area at Mayagonahalli and Naragalu. But the most important harvest is *ragi* (63%) whose crop is reaped only once, during the months of December-January, with a yield rarely exceeding 4 quintals per acre and sometimes no more than a cart-load of straw. Fortunately a recent development has mitigated the hazards of traditional dry agriculture, although not as effectively as the irrigation at Mottahalli. In the first place, this is connected with the cultivation of coconut trees (officially on 12% of the cultivated land, probably an underestimate) over the past 30 years. The coconuts, sold

9. We have chosen to study these two adjacent villages at the same time in order to cover a population comparable to that of Mottahalli. In fact, the average size of the villages in the irrigated rural system around Mandya is much greater than that of the villages belonging to the dry rural system around Nagamangala.

10. The population density of the rural taluk of Nagamangala is 136 habitants per km². But for the taluk of Mandya, because of irrigation, it is 330 per sq.km.



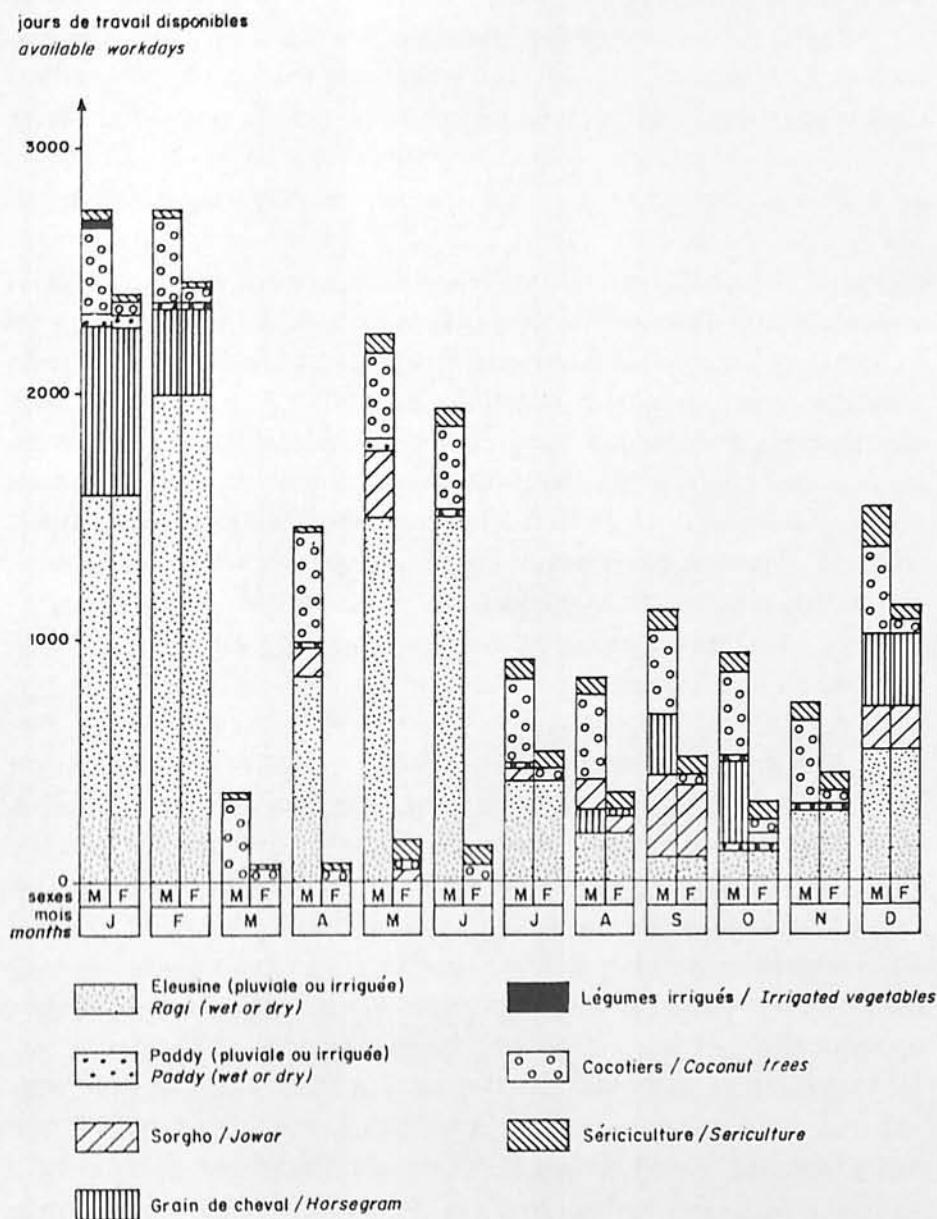
Map n° 5: Mayagonahalli and Naragalu location map

when just mature, form an advantageous source of additional income for the petty farmer, and all the peasants of Mayagonahalli and Naragalu own at least one or two trees. The problem is that coconuts become a very profitable venture only if they are stored for a year, after which they are made into copra : a speculation that the poor can ill-afford. But at least coconut trees are rain-fed and very rarely irrigated at Mayagonahalli and Naragalu. The other source of income, which appeared on the scene only in 1978, differs greatly: sericulture, silk-worm rearing. Less than 2% of the cultivated area is taken up by mulberry (a high-yielding variety) as this cultivation, more profitable than the others, requires irrigation. But only 14 of the farms own electric pumpsets, and not many more have a diesel pumpset. The very poor cannot afford to get involved in such an activity; the only benefit they can hope to draw from it is from increased labour opportunities (the task of rearing the worms involves a tremendous amount of work). But as the area covered by mulberry is very small, sericulture provides only 6% of the total agricultural work, as against 55% for ragi and 19% for coconut trees (graph 3).

Although we do not find any landless farmers in the two main settlements, 66% of the land-owners own less than 2 ha of land¹¹. That is why, because of the poor nature of the yields, 73 % of the population are in need of supplementary sources of income. But the problem is that the absolute figures in terms of agricultural employment to be found at Mayagonahalli and Naragalu are very low. The agricultural calendar shows a slack period at the height of the dry season, and there are few opportunities for female labourers; so that on average there are less than 50 man-days of work per year for each worker, including the non-salaried family (cattle tending however has not been registered). Moreover even during harvest time the remuneration for a whole day's work is only Rs 5-8 without food (at Mottahalli each labourer receives 8 kg of paddy in kind, i.e. around Rs 16, and always at least one free meal).

The combination of these various factors means that agricultural wage labour is unable to feed the entire local population. And the scope for other local sources of income is extremely limited. An economic diversification? Some farmers fatten and then sell three or four bullocks a year, while others either work as part-time carpenters or open up a teashop on the roadside. But this involves only a few individuals. Breeding of milch cattle has only just been started. The lack of capital and individual initiative, the feeble attraction of the town of

11. The average size of landholdings at Naragalu is 1.2 ha, and at Mayagonahalli, a richer village, 2.2 ha.



Graph n°3: Calendar of agricultural work per month and sexwise in Mayagonahalli and Naragalu

(Family labour as well as wage labour are included)

Nagamangala, the economically backward nature of the region, are hardly encouraging. Non-agricultural jobs? The possibility of finding temporary work through the Public Works Department or in the construction of private wells is very limited. Besides, the proud peasant society looks down upon such jobs.

The result of all this (and perhaps the partial reason behind it also) is that emigration becomes indispensable to the survival of these farms.

Thus we shall find that, paradoxically, it contributes towards retaining the population, since every household despatches at least one member, or even a segment of the family, in order not to migrate wholly. (We shall keep the study of matrimonial migrations for the end).

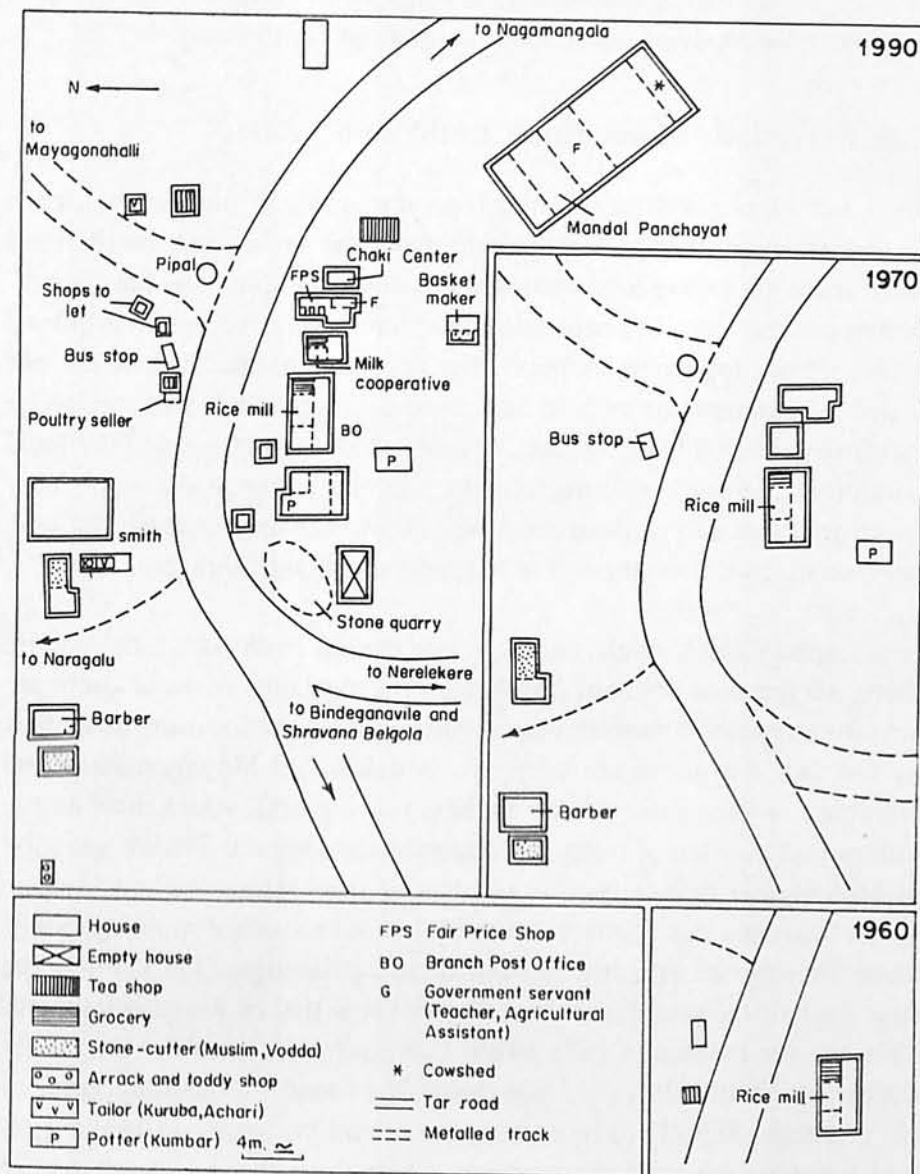
The Exception: in-migration to the two "Gates"

Let us begin with the non-representative. While the two main settlements are situated 500 m away from the main road, on the road itself there are two recently constructed colonies known as the "Gates" which possess certain peculiarities (which is why the data mentioned above are not applicable to them). The first of them, the "Mayagonahalli Gate" is spontaneous and, as indicated by map 6, has experienced a startling growth during the last 30 years. Although in general the local conditions are not very attractive, the location at the crossroads is very much so, especially since it has a bus stop where several teashops have been set up by the inhabitants of Mayagonahalli and Naragalu.

Apart from a single family which moved from Naragalu to settle there, all the nine resident families are in-migrants. Most of them are artisans from neighbouring villages attracted by the location, as well as by the fact that there are very few craftsmen at Mayagonahalli and Naragalu (where there are no barbers nor potters), while their native village had a surfeit of them. We have already seen this kind of situation at Mottahalli : it is caused by rigidity of employment linked to caste specializations; this economic rigidity has led to spatial mobility. Since these are migrant artisans, most of them are landless. The same is the case for half the population of the other Gate, that of Kenchegonahalli. This colony, created in 1971 by the Government, resembles the Garibi Colony at Mottahalli : the same donation of land for destitute families (in this case, SC/ST) to build houses on, and the same system of gifts and loans of material and money. Apart from the Adi Karnataka¹² households, who have shifted from the cramped SC colony at Naragalu, the rest are all in-migrants — Adi Karnataka, Budubuduke (beggars and story-tellers), Idiga (toddy tappers) — all of them used to a certain mobility, due to their traditional professions, and most of them originating from the immediate neighbourhood of Nagamangala or suburbs. This is hardly a case of spontaneous in-migration, but it is nonetheless a good example of the measures taken by the Government to try to prevent and even reverse rural exodus. It partly explains why there is such a large number of SC/ST households at Mayagonahalli and

12. Generic term used to define a group of Harijan castes native to Karnataka.

Naragalu : 12% as compared to 69% of Vokkaligas (and 7% of Kurubas, a caste of shepherds).



Emigration - a way of life

Let us now reconsider the two main settlements. Let us take a walk through the narrow streets of Naragalu on the day of the festival of Lord Barappa in March. At dusk, scenes from the *Mahabharata* will be enacted. Several young people pass us in their showy city outfits, their shiny watches and film-star sun-glasses setting them apart from the simply-clad villagers: a visual image of the importance accorded to out-migration at Mayagonahalli and Naragalu.

All these young men, sometimes a little too boastful, often surrounded by their wives in glittering saris and their children, are out-migrants who have returned to the village to celebrate the festival — at least those who want to display the fact that they have "succeeded". Only 20 % of the households have no member of the current generation who is or was an out-migrant. Among the 100 households studied by this survey 86 men (not including their nuclear families) were found to be living outside. In total, one sixth of the population of both villages are out-migrants. At Mayagonahalli and Naragalu, out-migration has become a part of the life-cycle and the average man has learnt to live with it. All the surrounding villages have experienced a similar situation: jobs and destinations vary, but out-migration is found everywhere.

But this out-migration is, unlike that found in Mottahalli, neither seasonal nor permanent. Of course there are exceptions, but generally the migration lasts from 3 or 4 to 10 years. If it is less, it is often because the migration has ended in failure. If more, it is because it has brought a job and brighter prospects in its wake. We are thus faced with "temporary" migrations, where the migrants do not always return during times of agricultural labour requirement - thereby adding the irony that in a region with such a negative migratory balance, there is a shortage of labourers during January and February! (The important point is to discover whether this lack of farm-hands is really due to out-migration. No doubt it is aggravated by such a phenomenon, but it would be more correct to assume that it is primarily due to the conditions of tropical agriculture dependent on scanty and erratic rainfall, which makes distribution of work throughout the year impossible).

Why out-migrate? Occupational channels and migration-routes

Most of these migrations, with very few exceptions, are to towns, and most often to cities. There are no records of instances like those rural-rural migrations to the sugarcane-crushers of Mottahalli. However, the crusher labourers do come from regions similar to Mayagonahalli and Naragalu. We encountered only one seasonal migrant who left for the irrigated region of Mandya, near Mottahalli, in order to help his relatives with paddy cultivation. But even in this case, there was no sugarcane involved: "We do not know how to harvest sugarcane. We do not know anybody there..." Migration to Mandya is

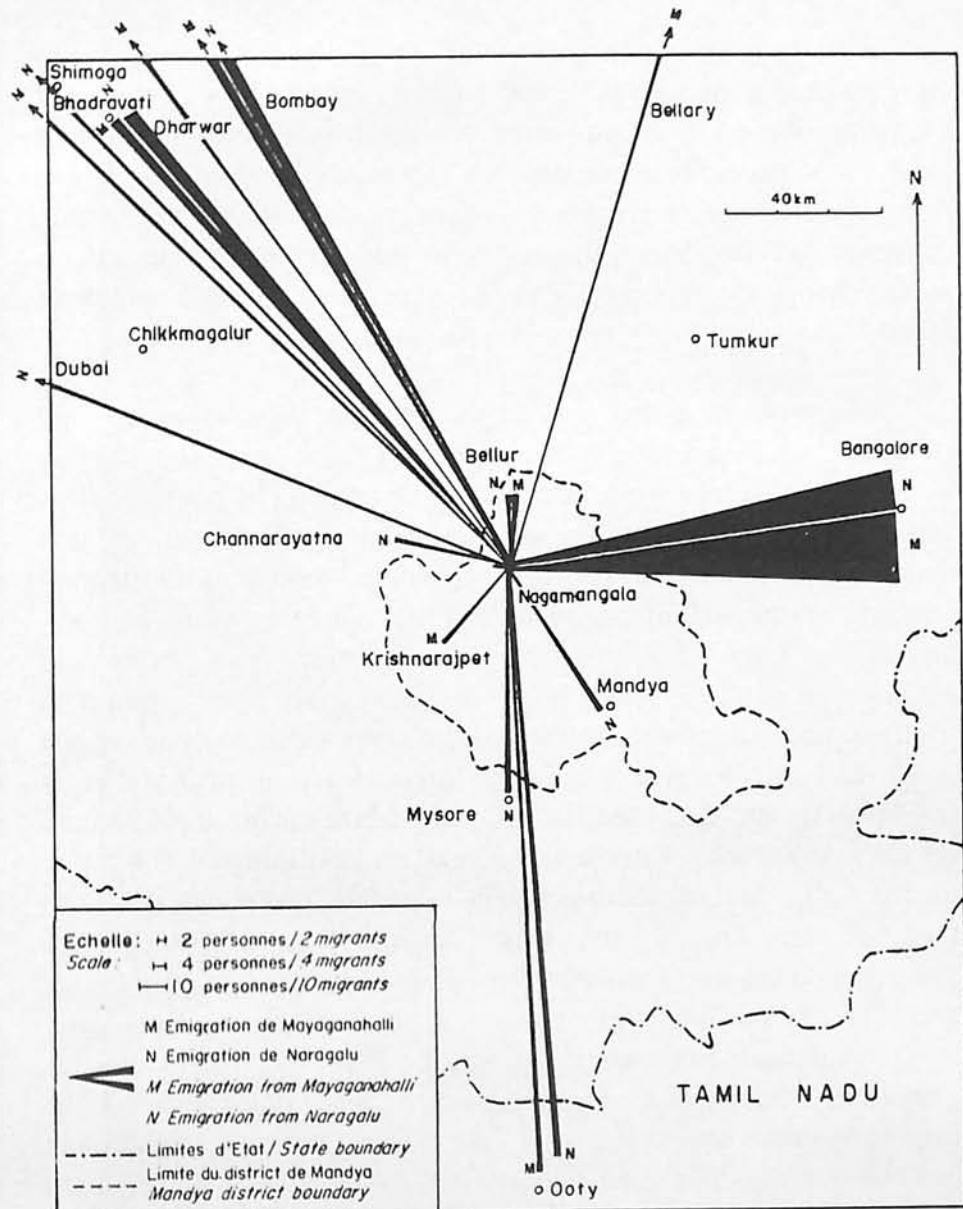
not a traditional feature, it lacks the requisite guarantees : so they will not go there.

Among the 148 destinations of past and present migrations that were registered¹³, 16 mentioned Bombay (at a distance of 1000 kms), 18 Ooty (Tamil Nadu), 25 Bhadravati and 55 (37% of the answers) Bangalore, 120 kms away. Map 7 shows that the migrants "skip" the town of Nagamangala, which although small, is very near (we did not come across a single commuter); they also skip Mandya, 50 kms away (only 2 migrants) and Mysore with its 650,000 habitants at a distance of 90 kms (2 migrants), in order to head directly for Bangalore or Bombay. "Step-migration" where, starting from the small locality near his village, the migrant passes from one town to another, to arrive finally at the far-off metropolitan city, is not practised. But what might seem like boldness (to leave Naragalu and travel directly to Bombay) is only the outcome of a series of well-established links between the village and these cities. In this connection, we cannot but point out how untrue are the two laws of Ravenstein (1889): one of which states that distance deters migration. But we have seen that at Mayagonahalli and Naragalu, it is fear of the unknown and not distance that checks migration. According to his second law, migration takes place in steps towards progressively larger cities; but here the migrant heads directly for the metropolitan cities without stopping at Nagamangala or Mandya.

The role played by these links is equally evident in the types of the jobs held by the migrants. Among 148 cases recorded, there are 30 instances of migrants having government jobs; government jobs are the dream of all migrants because of the kind of salary, job-guarantee, not to mention the retirement pension that goes with it. They are clerks as well as watchmen, servicemen, road-men. Twelve of the migrants are employed in Public Sector Industry, namely in the Bhadravati iron and steel industry. They too enjoy a lot of fringe-benefits, including lodging in the workers' quarters.

As regards agricultural employment, we find 27 instances, but all the cases — with the exception of some villagers who were adopted when young by families from the neighbourhood without any sons — have been exposed to the urban way of life: as gardeners working in the bungalows first of the British and later of the Indian high-ups at Ooty; or farmers who have bought plots of irrigated land near Bhadravati after years of working in the steel factories.

13. 50% of the households were surveyed in the villages.



Map n° 7: Male out-migration in Mayagonahalli and Naragalu

(Survey of 50% of the households)

It would not be out of place to mention also the seven drivers of trucks, buses, cars or autorickshaws, before going on to the biggest group, the 33 employed in tea-shops or restaurants (*hotels* in Indian English, *otelu* in Kannada). Their conditions vary depending on whether they are sweepers, waiters or cooks, but generally all of them are provided with food and lodging (they sleep on the floor in the dining room) in addition to their pay. The monthly salary of a waiter, for example, is around Rs 500 in Bangalore, Rs 600 or 700 in Bombay, not including the usual tips. On the whole, the salary received in these places is much higher than at Nagamangala (Rs 300), which is one of the reasons why there are no migrant waiters in this town. (The

other reason is connected with food-taboos: sweeping up the remains of a meal or clearing up is considered defiling; it is primarily the task of Harijans; so people feel less ashamed to perform it before strangers in Bombay, than before friends at Nagamangala. On the other hand, conversely, visiting bars is frowned down upon in puritan India: clients at Nagamangala would not like to find a barman who was a neighbour of theirs and would lose no time in spreading tales about them).

The problem is that most of the migrants we studied are only sweepers, who earn only half as much as the waiters. In Bombay Tammaiah, a Kuruba from Naragalu, after 15 years of out-migration, and only when he was on the verge of returning to the village, was managing to earn around Rs 1000 per month working as an itinerant roadside vendor, selling *bajis* and *idlis*. But since he was on his own, he had to pay out Rs 25 every month as baksheesh to a government employee in the city corporation, Rs 100 more to the same corporation itself (this time legally, but receipts were given to him only in the last year), and also to give away free *idlis* to a gang of *dada-giris* (racketeers) who extracted Rs 150 out of him during the Ganapati festival. And it took Tammaiah 15 years to land this job! His father owned 1.8 ha, half of which is barely cultivable; it was not enough to feed two sons. So at 23 the eldest, Tammaiah, jumped on to a bus going to Bombay along with another villager who was already working there. He did not inform his parents, as it would have greatly upset them. Tammaiah has worked his way up from the bottom: first he worked as a dishwasher, and, as he narrates, while doing his work "he used to bathe his hands with tears". He did not know any Marathi, nor any Hindi, which he picked up only later. After a stint at Bangalore as manager of a ration "Fair Price Shop", he returned to Bombay to work as a waiter with Rs 500 as monthly salary and 5 or Rs 10 extra as tips daily. This enabled him to save Rs 500 a month and to start this small venture, selling snacks by the roadside, the ultimate fruit of migration.

The catering service is relatively easy to enter: young and single as a rule, although never qualified, the migrant leaves his village for Bombay or Bangalore, where a friend or a neighbour working there has already procured him employment as a sweeper in a restaurant. If he can cope with the work pace, if he can grin and bear this disagreeable job, and if he has the ability to make friends, he could rise to become a waiter, first in a sordid little teashop and later in a big restaurant or bar. If promotion happened to come along he might be entrusted with grinding the flour for making *dosais*. The ultimate goal is to be appointed cook.

Another well marked-out channel is that of transport. Following the same principle, one first becomes a sweeper in a bus stand. Next one is elevated to the post of assistant to the driver; and with a bit of luck or money, the latter might teach the migrant how to drive. And if the migrant happens to get to know somebody in the Transport Corporation, he may be able to obtain a driver's licence. A few more years and he might well become an officially-appointed driver.

The awareness of such channels, known and regularly used, serve to encourage migration in the initial stages. D. Mehta (in V. Joshi, 1987, p.57) points out two stages in the decision to migrate: first, an evaluation of needs which may make the villager contemplate migration; but next, an evaluation of possible destinations is necessary. This second stage is very much evident at Naragalu, where the targets of out-migration are clearly marked out — an answer in the affirmative for the first stage will decide the rest.

These occupational channels, to which the out-migrant clings more or less successfully, are also geographical circuits. Although the sample considered was too small to be accorded too much importance, the table provided below does indicate some clear spatial correlations:

		at Bombay	at Bangalore
Employees in catering :	from Naragalu	66 %	27 %
	from Mayagonahalli	12 %	70 %

From Naragalu the channel leads mainly to Bombay, while from Mayagonahalli it goes rather to Bangalore. It is the same in the case of industrial workers: from Mayagonahalli 86% of them go to Bhadravati. From Naragalu, 36% only go there because the main channel from the village leads to factories in Bangalore¹⁴. Each village has its preferences

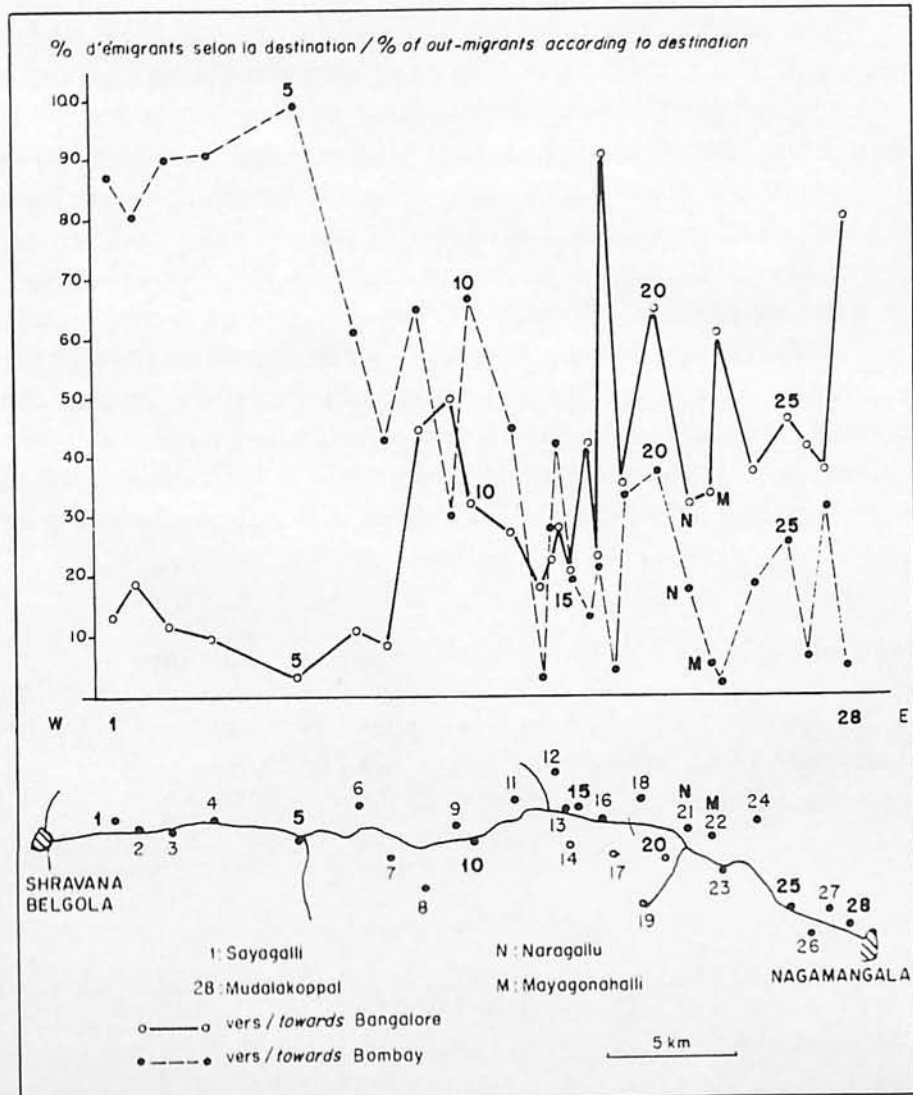
14. Twenty people from a tribal village near Mayagonahalli and Naragalu were arrested in 1990 in connection with the smuggling of sandalwood, which they obtained in Bombay and secretly filtered into Karnataka and especially Bangalore. Is it only a coincidence that this underground circuit corresponds to a major migratory route of the region?

and turns a blind eye to other potential circuits: while one of the major irrigated zones of south India is situated only a few tens of kilometers away, there has been only one isolated instance of migration to Mottahalli region. While poor peasants from the neighbouring district of Hassan migrate in large numbers to the coffee plantations in the Ghats (a situation described below by B.N. Shivalingappa), nobody from Nagamangala area goes there, seasonally or otherwise, except a single resident from Naragalu who leaves the village every winter. It is solely because he was born in a far-off village traditionally known for its migration to coffee plantations, where he still retains contacts even though he was adopted as a child to Naragalu.

Adherence to these particular destinations is the reason why, if we follow the road from east to west, leading from Nagamangala to Shravana Belgola, we encounter a distinct trend: out of the 28 villages along this road, the residents of the more eastern ones tend to migrate to Bangalore, whereas those to the west send more migrants to Bombay (graph 4).

Migration is too dangerous an activity to be undertaken all by oneself. Even if one is travelling all alone in the bus to Bangalore, it is tremendously comforting to know that there will be helpful friends or relatives waiting at the other end. Admittedly it would not do to overrate the help provided by these people. There is no association of natives from the district of Mandya in any of the large target cities, and unlike the towns of Gujarat, no city behaves like a "village antenna" (V. Dupont, 1990). But it is nonetheless important to follow the beaten track. It is even indecorous to set out on an adventure all by oneself, without any contacts, like a runaway. Besides, it is at the village level that the bonds of friendship and solidarity are most apparent. That is why this migratory segmentation mostly occurs village-wise. But sometimes it also corresponds to caste divisions: it is noteworthy that although half the population of the Gate of Kenchegonahalli, situated on Naragalu territory, originally came from Naragalu village, which is known for its migrations to Bombay, not even one of the nine SC/ST out-migrants has gone to Bombay. These lower castes migrate to different destinations than those chosen by the dominant Vokkaliga caste. The spatial segregation of the SC/ST's that prevails in the village, is equally evident in their migratory circuits.¹⁵

15. Which is not necessarily to their disadvantage. Out of these 7 out-migrants, 5 had found government jobs! The job-reservations made for them in the Public Sector were of great help. Hence they are not really keen on leaving Karnataka, because if they were to settle in some other Indian State where they would not be considered as "Scheduled", they would lose all the benefits that go with being SC/ST.



Graph n°4: Out-migration towards Bangalore and Bombay from the villages on the road Shravana Belgola - Nagamangala

The apparently arbitrary nature of these destinations is explained by the fact that they were first stumbled on by a pioneer migrant, whose antecedents are sometimes forgotten but who unknowingly opened up channels that are still used today. The first villager to go from Naragalu to Bombay was Bore Gowda, a Kuruba. But he was not a pioneer in the proper sense of the term : it was while working on the construction of the Lokavalli dam on the Tungabhadra, with co-workers who were already familiar with Bombay and who were themselves natives of villages situated to the west of Naragalu, that he decided to try his luck in Bombay in 1943.

The first person to leave for Ooty was Shivanna in 1945. He left along with some others after a series of droughts. They followed a recruiting sergeant from the army to go to work in the gun factory at Ooty. From 1947 onwards he earned his livelihood by milking cows for the barracks. After being transferred first to Belgaum, then to Pune and Bangalore, today he draws a monthly pension of Rs 600, besides enjoying the prestige that goes with being able to say "Good morning". Here too we find that although Shivanna's migration was to a large extent influenced by drought, it was not undertaken on an impulse nor in a haphazard manner. It was an organized migration (through the recruiting sergeant) and it was a collective migration. Such stories also provide us with chronological information: migrations gained momentum during and after the Second World War, when demographic growth heightened the demand for land in the villages.

Who out-migrates? Characteristic traits of migrants

All these out-migrants are men, young men, as is shown by the chart below of the age of out-migrants who are currently away from both these villages¹⁶:

≤ 20 years	21-30 years	31-40 years	41-50 years	> 50 years
15 people	18	4	2	0

85% of the out-migrants are below 30. The youngest are only 11 or 12 years old, who did not migrate because of the need to earn money, but in order to pursue their studies at the home of some relative who was in a better position to cater to their requirements. There is no record of any out-migrant above 50 years, though migrations to the city have become a noticeable phenomenon only the 1940's. The lack of such a record is perhaps due to limitations in the survey: it is quite likely that the children of older generation out-migrants remained with them in the city, but that since their relatives were often dead, there was no way they could be traced back to the village. Nevertheless, there is the possibility that most out-migrants return to the village before the age of 50.

16. The figures provided have only relative value, because some peasant answers were missing in our questionnaire forms.

On the other hand most of these out-migrants were educated. According to the 1981 Census, the percentage of literacy for men in Mayagonahalli and Naragalu was 55% and 51% respectively (and for women 9% and 18%); but the out-migrants are relatively better educated, as shown below:

	Illiterates	≤ 4 th Standard (primary school)	5th - 7th	8th - 10th (SSLC)	11th - 12th (PUC)	> PUC
number of out-migrants	1	7	9	16	3	4

If we assume that everyone who attended primary school learned how to read and write (which is not always the case), we would have a very low percentage of illiteracy among the out-migrant population: 20% as compared to 47% in the total population of the two villages¹⁷. Out-migration, which so far seemed to be motivated only by extreme poverty, is now seen clearly to act selectively, rejecting the illiterate and allowing only those who have some education to migrate. Unlike the in-migrants of Mottahalli, it is only the better qualified who are encouraged to out-migrate so that their educational capital yields a profit. A rural destination like Mottahalli holds no fear for the illiterates, but cities are a different matter altogether. Not only those holding a S.S.L.C. certificate or even a P.U.C. diploma go out in search of qualified employment, as in Mottahalli, but also those who feel they are sufficiently literate not to feel lost in Bangalore, sufficiently competent to be able to add up a bill in a restaurant in Bhadravadi or even rapidly pick up Marathi in Bombay. A typical example would be that of a family at Naragalu where the eldest son, an illiterate (like most eldest sons), helps his father with the work on their 1.2 ha of land, while the younger son, who has passed his S.S.L.C., works as an autorickshaw driver in Bangalore. The youngest of the trio is also employed there, as a servant in the household of a "minister", and gets a monthly salary of Rs 800.

This kind of situation, quite common in India (H. Ramachandra, in J. Racine, 1989) is also found at the taluk level. 41% of the male

17. However, B. Dasgupta (1976) in a survey on rural out-migrants undertaken nearly 20 years ago, records 42% (admittedly the level of illiteracy in India has decreased since then).

population from the rural area of the taluk of Nagamangala, which includes Mayagonahalli and Naragalu, know how to read and write. But the rural area of the irrigated taluk of Mandya (including Mottahalli which has only 31%) has a lower percentage of literacy (37%). This means that the in-migration zone has a higher rate of illiteracy than the out-migration zone. There are three possible reasons for this: first, pure chance, which always plays a role; second, that the permanent in-migrants who settle in Mottahalli are mostly illiterate; the third explanation is that out-migration favours education: in order to succeed, it is imperative for the migrant to know how to read and write; he therefore accords primary importance to schooling. At Mottahalli, on the contrary, agriculture provides for the needs of the inhabitants, who therefore do not feel the need for diversification and consequently for schooling; one piece of evidence in favour of this is that women, who never migrate in search of employment, are as little literate in the rural taluk of Nagamangala as in that of Mandya.

The last and most striking characteristic of these migrants is their relationship to the land. At Mayagonahalli and Naragalu, if we take into account only farms belonging to out-migrants, the ratio between the area in hectares of the paternal property and the number of male heirs (including the migrant) amounts to only 0.84, which is barely sufficient to support a family, however small. It is clear that at least one of the sons has to out-migrate. But this ratio is nonetheless higher than that of the average population in the two villages: 0.63 ha per son! While the average farm-size at Mayagonahalli and Naragalu is 1.6 ha, that of the out-migrants is 2.24 ha. The out-migrants, paradoxically, possess more land than the others. Firstly, and perhaps this is the main reason, they are in certain cases sons of wealthy land-owners, who have gone to the city to pursue higher studies. Secondly, a high demand for land is not in itself a sufficient reason for migration. Nearly all the villagers are short of land, but the poorer section migrates least. Out-migrants normally leave home because of lack of land, but below a certain threshold one cannot even leave. "Immobility is often the consequence of extreme poverty". (B. Dasgupta, 1976, p.18). We will return to this type of immobility later. For the present we will state only that destitutes stay where they are because they are usually illiterate, because they are afraid to leave the security of their own village, because they are often tied down by debt, but also because of the small size of their cultivable plots: at Mayagonahalli and Naragalu, it is rare to go away and abandon the land; the ideal solution is to give it away to a brother living in the same joint family; but, because of the small size of their holdings, the poor live in nuclear families, and never in a joint family — so out-migration is more difficult for them.

The out-migrant and his village

The arrangements between the migrant and his family are rarely formal and never permanent. As far as the land is concerned, as we have already mentioned, it is essential to see to it that it does not leave the family. Only 13% of the migrants have sold their land, but sometimes to a relative, even to a brother living separately. 6% of the migrants allow their piece of land to lie fallow, either because it is hardly cultivable or because they hope to return soon. 29% let out their land, mostly to some close relative (although this practice has been prohibited by the Land Reform Act, 1974). But in most cases (52%), the migrant, who has been staying with his father or brother in the same household, deposits his share of the land with them. This explains the fact that 60% of the villagers who had never migrated are only sons. When Tammaiah was leaving for Bombay he entrusted his land to the care of his brother; but in March the latter turned up in Bombay without any warning. Tammaiah was obliged to send him straight back to Naragalu, because "the first rains were due and there was nobody to cultivate the lands of *our native village*". Brothers have been known to pass on the "torch of migration" in the family, but the land is never abandoned. The relations of the migrant who remain in the village are entrusted with the responsibility of handing his share of the harvest over to him when he returns, a share which is, theoretically, proportionate to his stake in the family property. But if the out-migrant is rich, or if he has broken away from the ties that bound him to his family in the village, or if the harvest has been poor, then this share may be waived (33% of the cases).

On the other hand, there are instances within this majority group where the migrant leaves his piece of land with his wife or an old man, who then has to cultivate it with the help of neighbours, relatives or even by employing coolie labour. The son of old man Alisandra is employed in the Public Works Department at Bangalore, where he earns a monthly salary of Rs 800. Alisandra is too weak to cultivate their small hectare of land by himself; but rather than summon his son back home, he prefers to hire daily labour to till the land (he does not have any cattle of his own and consequently has to pay Rs 25 per day to the coolie who brings his own bullocks). It is difficult to do both: to migrate as well as hold on to the ancestral property. But for the villagers it is imperative to hold on to the land, however barren, under all circumstances, because it represents a surety and a hope: hope that one day the ancestral property will become a productive asset; the hope that one day it might be possible to plant coconut trees on it, dig a well with whatever meagre sum of money the out-migration may earn, the perhaps even more foolish hope that one day irrigation of the fields by

the Hemavati river will become a reality. Is this attachment for the land mere sentimentality? Surely not.

The migrant visits the village at irregular intervals. If he is a bachelor and living in Bangalore, he may go there once a month. But if he is working in a place like Bombay which is further away, or if he has his family with him there, he visits the village only once or twice a year, sometimes even less, in order to celebrate the village festivals with the entire family. It is during these visits that he may collect his share of the produce, and that he is also able to give his family some more money that he has saved, in addition to what he has already sent them by money-order.

The married migrant who has a wife and children with him in his exile is almost never able to give money to his family in the village; and as for the others, their relatives in the village also say that they receive very little from them. An unmarried waiter in a restaurant will not send back more than Rs 300 (roughly half his salary, which is not reduced by the costs of food and lodging, as these are provided free), and sometimes even sends nothing at all. The average amount sent back by the waiters is Rs 100 per month, which corresponds to 10 or 15 days of agricultural work in the village. On the other hand, the figures given are perhaps underestimates. According to statements by unmarried out-migrants, they sometimes send as much as 80% of their salary back home (boasting?). But it is also true that although there are a large number of villagers who "migrate with their feet in the city and hearts in the village", (P.S. Majumdar, 1978, p.167) there are others who, upon contact with urban civilisation, quickly succumb to the expensive vices and pleasures of city life. In any case, the money is never sent home on a regular basis.¹⁸

However, sending money is not the only contribution the out-migrants make to the village. They also bring or send clothes from the city, a watch, a cricket cap... But above all, if the father is still alive and the ancestral property not yet divided, the most important contribution would be to provide financial help at the time of the marriage of brothers and sisters (the marriage of a sister is particularly expensive due to ever increasing dowry demands). This, like sending remittances, is a way not only of showing one's affection towards the family, but also of ensuring one's right to a share of the ancestral property in the

18. We did not notice any occurrence of the phenomenon noted by A.S. Oberai (1983) in the Punjab, that the poorer emigrants send home more money - in order to ensure their possible social reinsertion in the village, because they feel more need to take precautionary measures than the others.

case of a division. In the case of a generous dowry, it is also a way of commanding a certain respect among the villagers.

What kind of conclusion can we draw from all this? It is difficult to generalize, because the situation varies so much from one individual to another. Some who have out-migrated to Bombay, a completely alien city, had a nervous breakdown and returned without making any headway whatsoever; there are even instances of the migrant vanishing altogether, leaving no trace behind. For others, the going has been relatively smoother, and in certain rare cases, due more to merit, courage, grit rather than luck, the migrant succeeded in becoming a little richer. Tammaiah estimates his total earnings during 15 years of migration at Bangalore and Bombay as Rs 100,000 (but at what cost!). He has been able to buy 0.15 acres of land irrigated by an adjacent tank, which he says supplies him with 5 quintals of paddy every harvest (and sometimes there are two crops in a year), 1.5 acres of non-irrigated public land (*darkhast*), and two rooms in a large house (Rs 24,000) with a plot of land situated at Mayagonahalli Gate, which he plans to rent out. He has been able to plant 30 coconut trees and these will later ensure that he will never have to go to Bombay again. Such was his reasoning. But as a fourth daughter was just born, Tammaiah had to leave once more the village in 1990.

Migration, duration and qualifications

The different types of out-migration from Mayagonahalli and Naragalu can be classified according to two criteria. The first typology is based on the qualification of the migrant :

- *Unskilled migration* is not so much a matter of earning money elsewhere as of having one mouth less to feed at home. "The rationality of their migration is not based upon a strategy of 'maximisation' as [Todaro (1976)] argues, but upon a strategy of survival" (J.Breman, 1985, p. 219). This type of migration mainly involves men working as menials, or as sweepers in restaurants, who save as little as they earn. "My father", says one of them, "sent me to Bombay at the age of ten to work in a tea-shop, because the time of *vanavasa*¹⁹ had come for us". These are individual migrations, undertaken by young and single men. They do not last more than a few months or years, and the migrant often switches jobs within the same city. When migrations last longer, they correspond to the second type :

19. "Life in the forest": Book 3 of the *Mahabharata*, which deals with the exile of the Pandavas; it is synonymous with a time of trial.

- *Skilled migration* is genuinely a matter of augmenting income. With the exception of a few highly-qualified people who went on to become government white-collar employees, these skilled migrations involve villagers who have managed to acquire some degree of training during an earlier trip to the city as unskilled migrants: these are therefore step-migrants who have encountered some success. A Vokkaliga from Naragalu started out as a sweeper in a restaurant in Bombay, and later went on to become a cashier (he has a S.S.L.C. diploma). There he picked up a smattering of English, and through various contacts (and an expenditure of Rs 20,000) managed to obtain a job in Dubai, where he then called his wife and children to join him. Before his marriage, he used to send his family Rs 500, but afterwards he stopped even that. Since he had not visited the village for the past five years, his family there did not even know what his job was in Dubai. Although his migration was initially undertaken on the basis of a collective decision, with the aim of supplementing the household's income from their landholding (3 acres for three sons and the parents), after some time it became the sole responsibility of the migrant, who alone stood to gain directly from it.

Calling the migrant's wife to join him at his place of work is a sign of success. It marks the transition from the first to the second type of migration. But not all succeed, as is evidenced by the following extract from a letter written by a married emigrant working as a watchman in Bombay, but whose wife and children are at Bhadravati at the home of his in-laws:

"To my respected mother. Your dear son asks for your blessings. By the grace of God and yours, I'm well. I hope you're also keeping well. Your letter apprised me of your situation. I've not sent any money, this is the main cause of your problems. If I sent Rs 150, it would not happen. I promise to send Rs 100 or 200 per month from now onwards. I have not yet been able to come and see you. I'm not earning sufficient money to be able to rent a room for Rs 250 [in order to house his wife and children]. All the landlords ask a guarantee of Rs 8000. Still, you have married me before the entire village in public, according to the rites, and I do not wish to bring disgrace to your name. That is why I shall summon my family here in January(...)"

To make the typology more precise, we can make another classification based on the duration of the migration:

- Migrations forced by extreme poverty: these seldom occur. They are brought about by a drastic turn of circumstances, such as the

drought of 1965-66. Then people are compelled to leave home, individually and for a short time. These are the only instances when, driven by hunger and ready to accept just about any job, the migrant leaves everything to chance and catches the first bus available.

- Target migration: in order to collect the money needed for the marriage of a sister, for building a new house, or for paying back the amount borrowed to buy a she-buffalo, a son takes up a job, generally not requiring much qualification, for two or three years. Thus, in order to pay off debts incurred by his father, who had bought a piece of land (2 acres) worth Rs 45,000 on credit, and after having failed to obtain a S.S.L.C. certificate, one young Vokkaliga set off to work in a restaurant in Bombay, where he currently earns Rs 300 monthly, and during his yearly visits brings home roughly Rs 1000.

But if he were to get a better-paid job, he might be tempted to remain in the city, in which case this would become an example of the third type of migration :

- Long-term migrations: these involve autorickshaw drivers, bus drivers, waiters, factory workers at Bhadravathi... Their relative success, and the qualifications often acquired on the job, explain why they have been able to stay away for 10 or 15 years, sometimes their whole life. But in case of unexpected failure or accident, what is envisaged by the migrant as a long-term migration could end up being a short-term one. Here, one is faced with the difficulty of classifying these migrations *ex post*. When he leaves the village does the migrant have any precise idea about how long he expects to be away? And if yes, is he able to stick to it? As a matter of fact, there have been instances of target-migrations undertaken with the "cherished myth of return" (B. Dasgupta ed., 1976, p.210), which however became permanent migrations, either as a result of deteriorating family conditions in the village, or of a promotion received by the migrant which prompted him to remain in the city.

- Permanent migrations: the migrant has no intention of ever returning to the village. He is either a Government employee, a worker in a public sector Iron and Steel Industry, or a serviceman. Since he receives a good salary, he can afford to have his family staying with him, like one illiterate Vokkaliga who started out with a temporary job at the Electricity Board at Ooty, but was later assigned a permanent job as a "line-man" and now earns a monthly salary of Rs 2000 in a town near Naragalu. This is undoubtedly the most outstanding example we

found of promotion by out-migration, so successful than it remains, unfortunately, exceptional.

These last two types of migration are usually family migrations, because of the secure nature of the job. But the first two types are undertaken by the male migrant on his own. This explains why at Mayagonahalli and Naragalu there are respectively 1027 and 1079 women for every 1000 men (1045 for the rural population of Nagamangala taluk), whereas the irrigated village of Mottahalli, target area of male in-migration, has a sex-ratio of only 916 (934 for the rural population of Mandya taluk).

But most of the out-migrants return to the village after their sojourn in the city. These are either:

- Forced returns: for example, after closure of work on the construction site of a dam ("when the out-migrants came to visit us, they strutted about in their new clothes, but after the closure of the work on the dam, they became poor again like the rest of us"); or as a result of political upheavals, such as the xenophobic movements of the "sons of the soil" (M. Weiner, 1988) in Bombay in 1974 which forced one Lingayat, for instance, to abandon his electroplating workshop and flee for his life.

- returns at the end of target-migrations, after enough money has been saved.

- returns due to disillusionment or lassitude, especially if the migrant in question does not have any qualified job. "Hidiyalilla, it did not take me" is a Kannada expression that is often used in this context.

- returns after retirement : for example, the former corporal from Naragalu, who now receives a monthly pension of Rs 500. He has chosen to live in the village, in a fine new house. But actually a pension is often a factor in deciding to remain in the town, since it is useful in leading a city-life which is more expensive than living in the village. This is one of the reasons why most out-migrants without a pension, even if they were getting a good salary before their retirement, are often obliged to return to the village when they are no longer capable of supporting themselves in the city. That is partly the reason why, as we saw earlier, there are so few old out-migrants in the city.

Lastly, very often, returns are not due to circumstances in the city or town, but in the village itself, most often the old age of the head of family. If a farmer has two sons but not enough land or means to support them, the more educated of the two has to migrate. But if the father dies or becomes too old to cultivate, the migrant is expected to

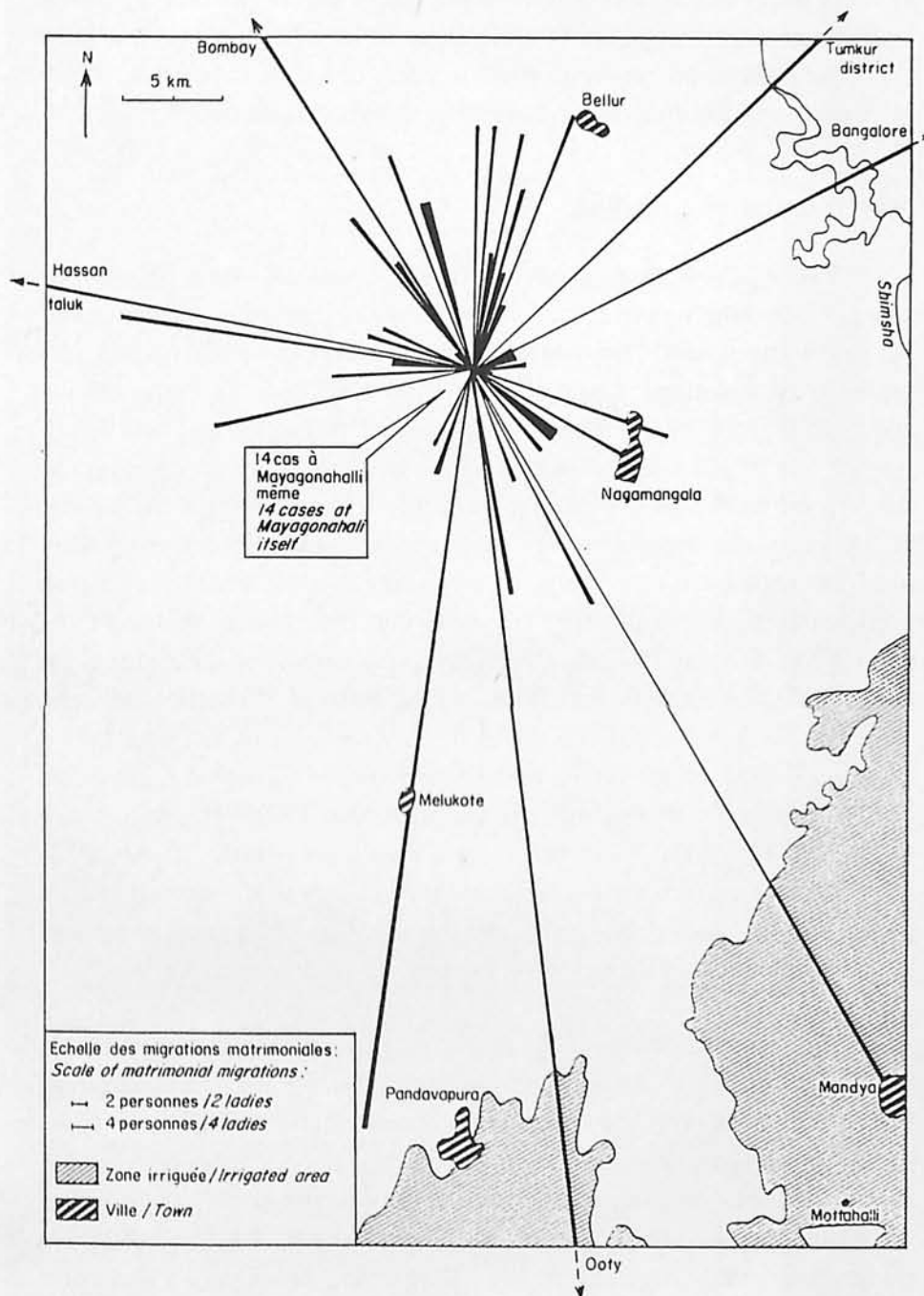
return to the village to help his brother manage the landholding, especially if, in addition, his salary in the city is not attractive enough. What is important here is that home-comings should not be considered an aberration or always humiliating signs of bitter failure, even though cyclic migrations are less important in South India than in Africa, where migrants often return to the village "like spawning salmon".²⁰

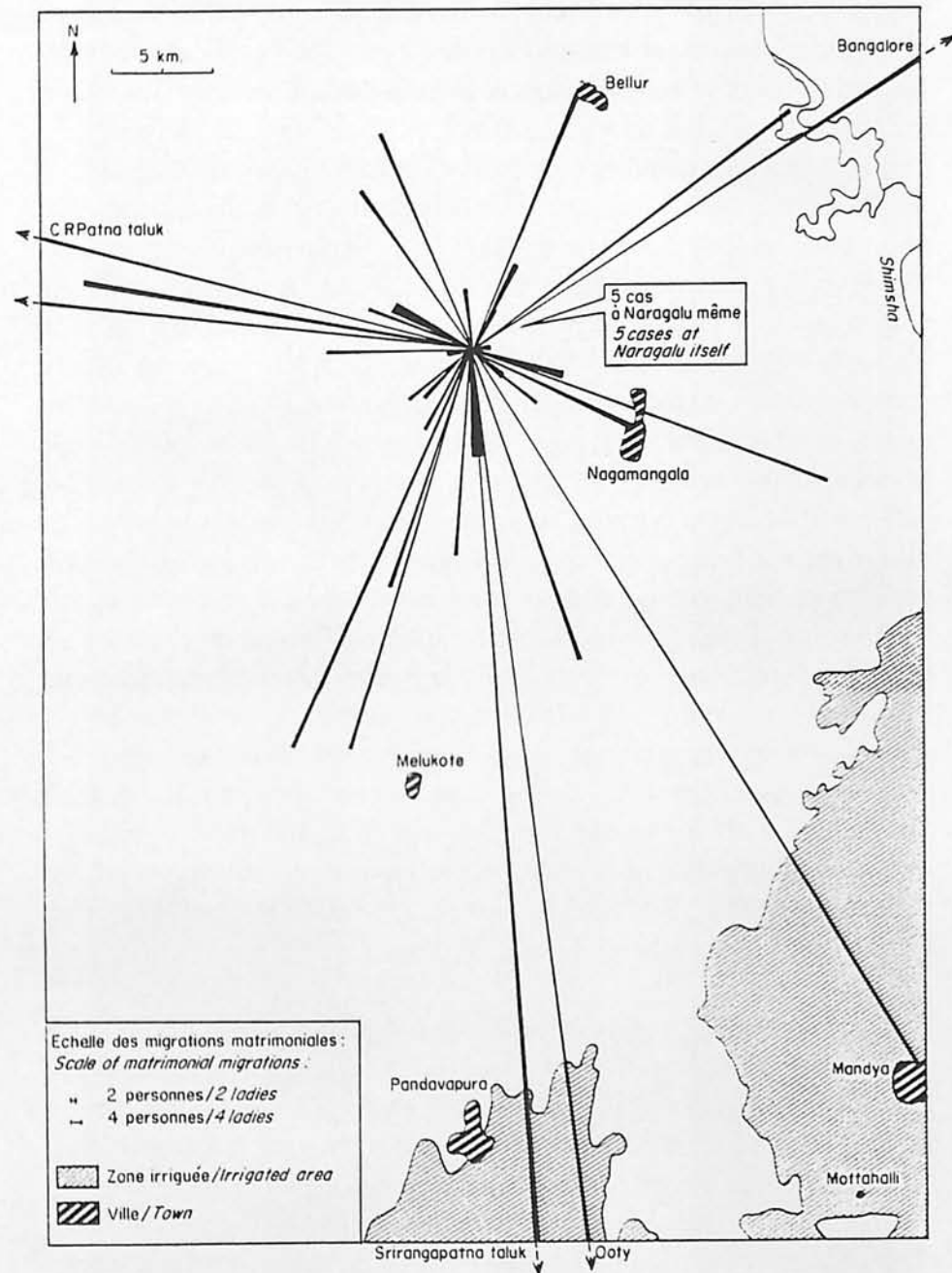
Matrimonial migrations

Taken altogether, these different types of male migratory movements, undertaken for economic reasons, are more numerous at Mayagonahalli and Naragalu than the matrimonial migrations represented on maps 8 and 9 — a rare occurrence in India. If we compare them with the map of matrimonial migrations at Mottahalli (map 2) we might well ask which of the two creates more openness to the outside world, and is more responsible for promoting matrimonial alliances with sometimes very distant regions: the out-migration predominating in the two dry villages, or the in-migration predominating in Mottahalli? It is true that the varying nature of the migrations in the two rural systems (seasonal or permanent at Mottahalli, and mostly short-term or long-term at Mayagonahalli and Naragalu) makes comparison difficult. However, it can be stated that at Mottahalli 68% of marriages take place within a radius of 5 kms, and 36% within the village itself. At Mayagonahalli and Naragalu, these figures are 44% and 17% respectively. This means that the village of in-migration is more close-knit than the villages of out-migration. Moreover, the destinations of marriage-migration of Mottahalli are less diverse than those of the dry rural system.

We can also compare the marriage maps of Mayagonahalli and Naragalu with those of out-migration from these villages. Several target places thus appear as places of matrimonial alliances. But there is no exact correlation. No marriage has taken place in Bhadravati; and the instances of marriage with Bangalore are much fewer than the number of out-migrants who find their way to the capital of Karnataka. It is preferred to marry a girl from the village, and people look down on women from cities, who "sometimes refuse to go in search of water."

20. Ph. Bartle: "Cyclical Migration and the Extended Community : A West African Example", p.107, in R.B. Mandal (ed), *Frontiers in Migration Analysis*, New Delhi, Concept Publishing Company, 1981, 518 p.





Map n° 9: Marriage migrations of Naragalu. Birth place of the wives and marriage place of the inhabitants in Naragalu
(Survey of 50% of the village households. The number of migrants is proportional to the thickness of the bottom of the arrow, not to the area of the arrow)

* * * * *

To conclude, what assessment shall we make of the emigration from Mayagonahalli and Naragalu ? Very often models dealing with the patterns of behaviour and the kinds of decision involved in out-migration are based on the principle that the choice regarding migration is purely an individual one [models of Lewis (1961), Todaro (1976)]. But critics of these authors, most of them structuralist, claim that since the individual is bound by social and political as well as economic norms, it is on the contrary a collective decision, generally taken at the family or the caste level. We have to admit that in the light of our findings regarding these two villages, it is impossible to discard one theory in favour of the other. Migrations for work seem generally to correspond to decisions taken at the level of the household (a member of the family leaves the village in search of work while the others remain behind to look after the house and land). But migrations undertaken for reasons that have nothing to do with the economic state of affairs, for example family quarrels, are primarily individual decisions. The two types of migration are often closely interlinked. Moreover there are instances of clashes between the two levels of decision as well: for example, when the household wants their educated son to help with the farm-work, while he himself would much rather go away for further studies or to find some other form of employment. Sometimes, the son is too weak to oppose for long the wishes of his family, and he ultimately gives in. On the other hand, the individual decision may prevail, as in the case of one illiterate Harijan of Mottahalli, both of whose sons are out, one studying in college (P.U.C.) and the other, a graduate in mechanical engineering, working at Bangalore. Thus, the helpless farmer is forced to hire day-labourers to till his two poor, unirrigated acres of land.

Individual logic, family or lineage logic, and caste logic — all these levels of decision have to be taken into account in order to get at an undistorted version of the reality. At the village level, the outcome is positive. Of course, the economic situation is not very much improved by out-migration, which on the contrary involves a lot of sacrifices; but it is nonetheless true that out-migration, by acting like a safety-valve, enables at least a certain percentage of the population to remain where they are under bearable circumstances. Moreover, the economic disadvantages are minor: out-migration causes a shortage of agricultural labourers only for a few days in a year, although it is enough to bring about the decline of *rāgi* in favour of coconut trees, which require fewer seasonal workers. This in turn provides an incentive to out-migration by reducing the amount of agricultural work available. But all this is still on a limited scale; and the big changes taking place in the village (expansion of commercial agriculture with the introduction of

sericulture and the sale of copra) have very little direct causal link with migration. As regards the growth of urban characteristics in the villager's daily life (clothes, radios, mental attitudes...), it is not clear whether this would be less if migration had not happened, because it is due primarily to the general development of communication and transport, not to mention the consumer-goods industry.²¹

Speaking in general, although the village does not become rich through out-migration, it is able to survive because of it. That is why out-migration can be looked upon as a conservative factor, since it prevents the established social structures and traditions from disintegrating altogether. Finally, it also fulfills the same function as irrigation at Mottahalli: it provides a solution to the demographic and economic crisis in villages with too high a natural growth rate. Mayagonahalli and Naragalu did not experience the same kind of economic diversification and social changes as the non-irrigated village of Dalena studied by T.S. Epstein (1962, 1973). In fact, it was not because Dalena was deprived of irrigation that diversification became necessary (as T.S. Epstein seems to think), but solely because it is situated on the Mysore-Bangalore National Highway. Mayagonahalli and Naragalu are not lucky enough to have a similar location, and the absence of irrigation is not a reason for change in itself.

Next we must make an appraisal at the household level because the decision to out-migrate often takes place within the fold of the family, not only in the case of target-migrations which, more than the others, are "linked migrations" (B. Dasgupta, 1976). Here too, the outcome is positive, because it makes some landholdings which were too small to feed the entire family viable. If the remittances sent home by the out-migrants are of a reasonable amount, the household budget is often balanced, even if there is rarely an excess-balance.

However, if migration is usually of benefit to the household, at the individual level this varies, mainly because of the extremely painful nature of out-migration: the outcome may lie anywhere between total failure and a respectable and well-paid job. Also, after returning to the village, the migrant may psychologically find himself in a situation of failure and consequently refuse to go back to agriculture, spending all his time doing the rounds of the tea-shops at Nagamangala. If on the

21. If Harijans are allowed inside the tea-shops at the Gates and are even allowed to drink from the same glasses as the other castes (which is prohibited to them at Mottahalli), it is not so much because socio-religious taboos are less rigid there because of contacts with urban civilisation through out-migration, as because the Gates are of recent origin and situated on a busy road, outside the traditional limits of the village.

contrary the migration is a success, he may proudly display his wealth by building a sprawling house, painted in bright colours. He may also (but these are rare instances) reinvest his money in poultry farming, a well, a tea-shop or even, like Tammaiah, in reclaiming previously barren land. But these are exceptional cases. Once when Tammaiah returned to the village from Bombay for a year, he cultivated some public fallow land (illegally). Now he is equally enterprising, plans to set up some business ventures and has acquired land at Naragalu, before deciding to go again to Bombay. True, Tammaiah has four young daughters: paying for their dowries will become a heavy burden for him later. Most migrants, on the other hand, simply return to traditional agriculture as practised by their ancestors, without thinking of any other possible form of diversification. Admittedly not everybody has a choice, for many have returned with very meagre gains. But even those who have profited from out-migration content themselves with planting a few coconut trees, soon discarding their flashy city-clothes for the drab, rural vests. They are content to resume the traditions of the village as if they had never left .

ROOTS AND MOORINGS

"I'm going home", said Visni. "I don't know if I'll come back next season. I have land on my own. I think it is better to work on my land even if it is more difficult."

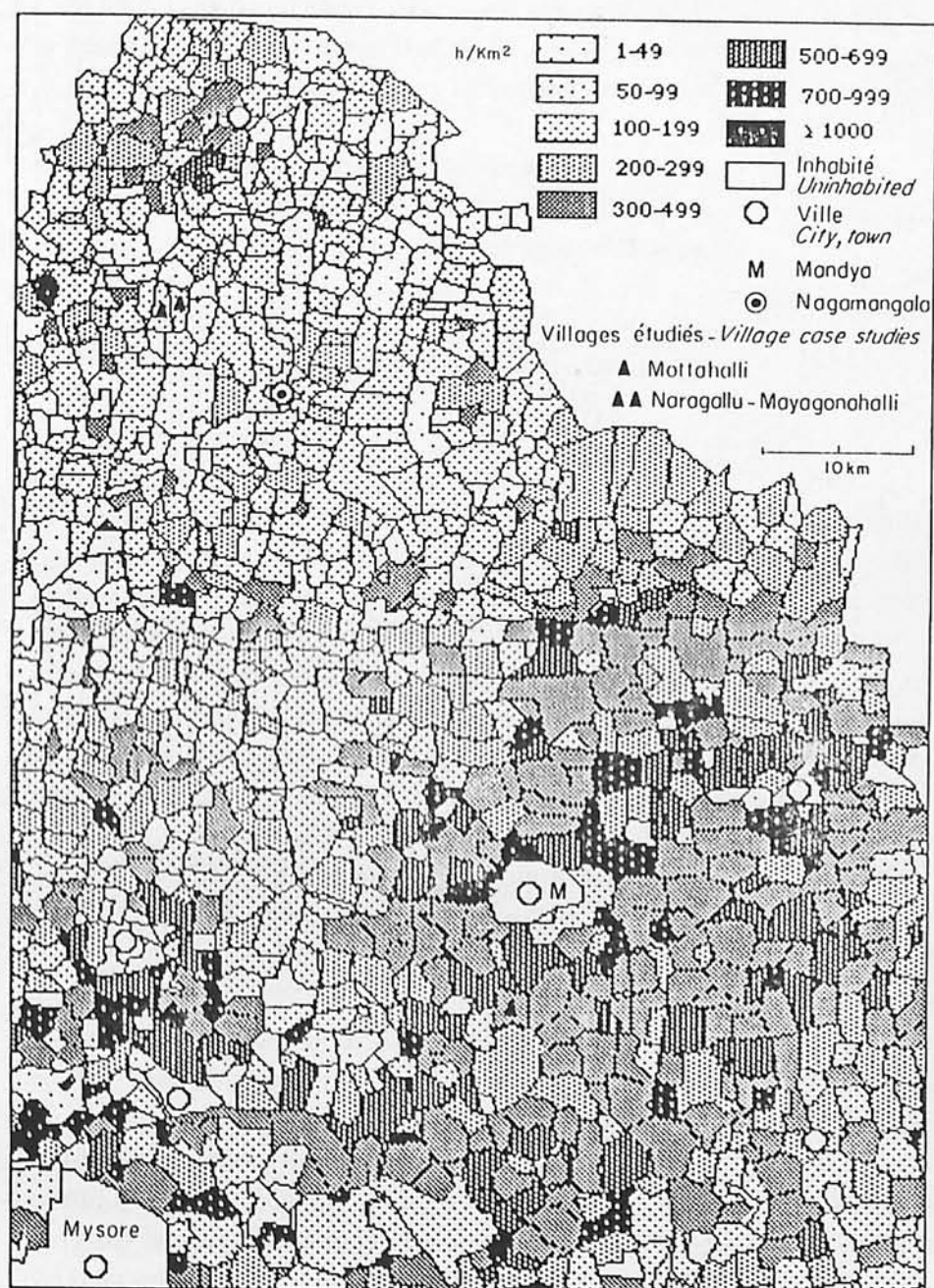
"I like the towns", said Ram Prasad. "I like the shops and people and lots of noise. I will never go back to my village again. There is no money to be made there".

Ruskin Bond, *Time stops at Shamli and other stories*, Penguin India, New Delhi, 1989, p.96.

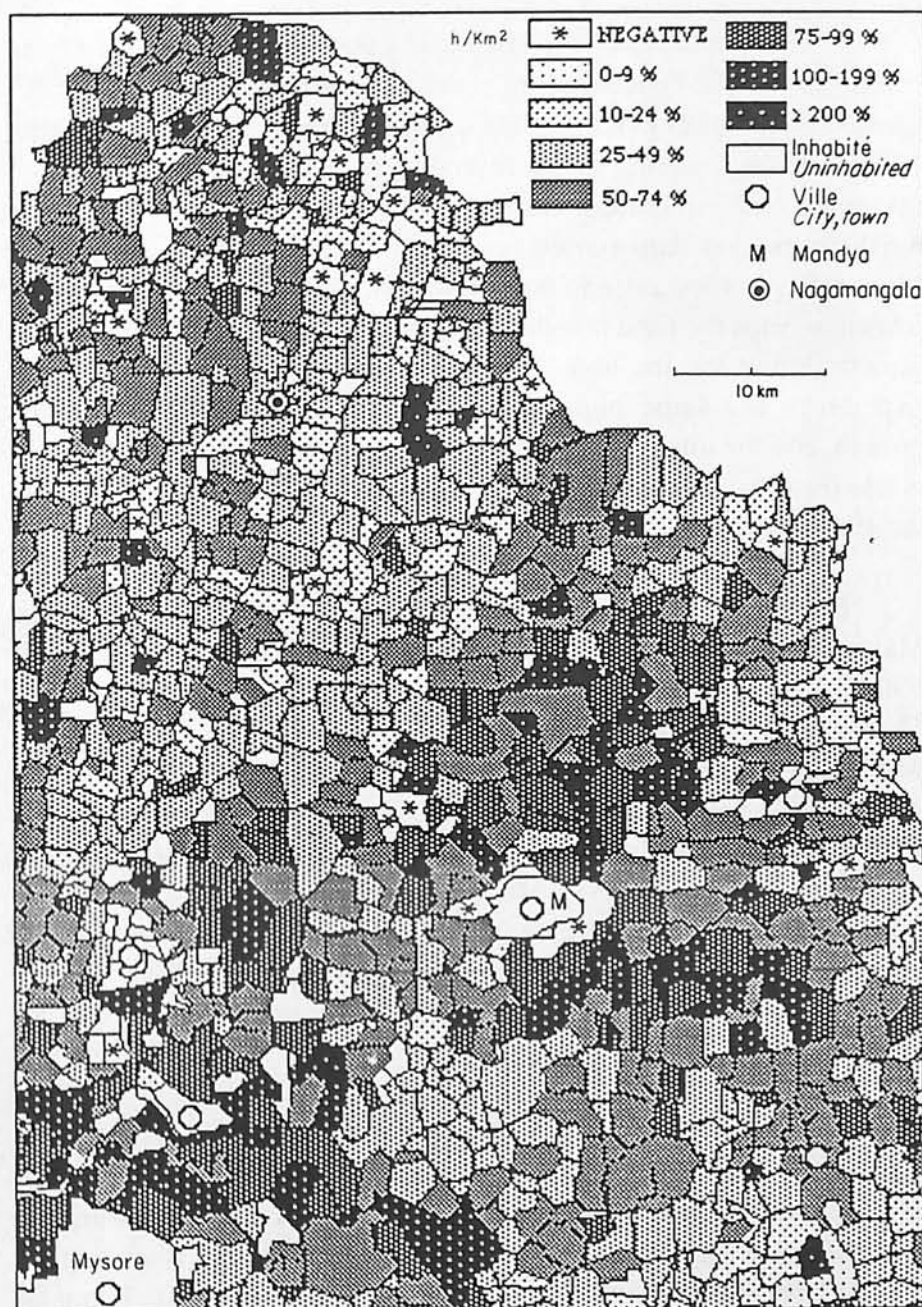
The differing points of view of these two teenagers from Himalayan villages who work during the summer in a cinema in the valley, accurately sum up the dilemma faced by every villager: to migrate or not to migrate? To return or not to return? And above all to cling to one's roots or not? It is a question too rarely tackled by the social sciences. In the preceding chapters we have tried to analyze why the peasants migrated. Let us now see why many do not; let us try to explain, on the basis of a survey of only three villages in the district of Mandya, selected as representative, why in 1981, when the percentage of rural population resident in villages was 76.3% for India as a whole, in the district of Mandya this figure was as high as 84.5%.

The Rural Sponge

This sponge is yet to be squeezed. Our two rural systems, irrigated and rain-fed, had population densities of 360 and 170 hts/km² respectively in 1981. The figure for the irrigated area is more than double that of the dry one, but in both cases the average is very high (maps 10 and 11) if we consider that the physical characteristics of the region are similar to those of African Sahel countries such as Burkina Faso, where densities rarely exceed 20 inhts/km². As corroborated by map 11, the growth rate of the rural zone of Mandya taluk (+ 54% during 1961-81) and to a much lesser degree that of the dry rural zone of Nagamangala taluk (+ 40%) are nevertheless comparable to the rest of India, both urban and rural (+ 56%).



Map n° 10: Density of population (inh/km²),
village wise (1981)



Map n° 11: Population growth, village wise (1961-1981)

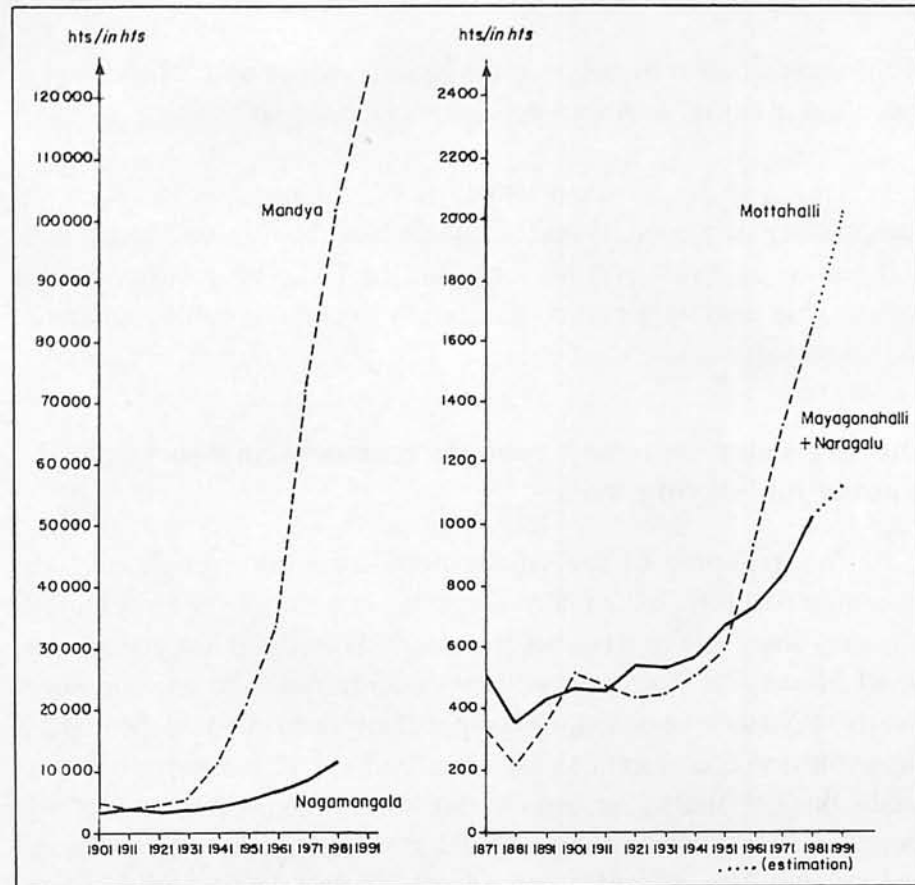
This does not mean that the towns are not growing. Mandya in 1901 totalled 4496 hts and 121,000 hts in 1991. During the decade 1961-71, it has even experienced a growth rate *scale* of 116.3%. Recently, it has acquired the status of *city*, applicable in India to towns of more than 100,000 inhabitants. But Nagamangala, on the other hand, continues to be a small town. Today, it comprises only 14,000 hts, whereas in 1901 it had 3516.

Graph 5 indicates that after a hesitant start at the turn of the century, when the population stagnated and even declined due to widespread famines and epidemics, demographic growth really took off after 1931 with the lowering of the mortality rate, even though the region remained non-irrigated. It was only after 1941, when the Krishnarajasagar dam started operating, that first Mandya and later Mottahalli recorded a rise in the population. This is proof enough that if irrigation helps the rural population, it did not in any way hamper urban growth. However, the non-irrigated region of Nagamangala did not experience the same population boom, although there was some growth, and the total population of Mayagonahalli and Naragalu today is less than that of Mottahalli alone, although the contrary held good in the 19th century.

But what most concerns us here, is the fact that the population of Mayagonahalli and Naragalu continues to rise (although on a lower scale than the natural growth) despite the absence of canal irrigation. There is some migration, but not so much as would reduce the rural population or even cause it to stagnate. This is a good example of the way in which people cling to their roots. At Naragalu there are peasants whose sons or brothers are in Bangalore or Bombay, but who have never visited Mysore or even Mandya. The "outside" (*horagada*) does not begin with the neighbouring village of Nagamangala, nor even with villages 5 kms away, but at the boundaries of the *huttiduru* (native village) itself. These villages of migrants are populated by stay-at-homes.

The precincts circumscribed by the four venerable stone porticos (some of which have disappeared) which mark the cardinal points of entry to the village represent an almost *cocooned* kind of life for the villagers. Here are the roots (*beru*) of their daily life; this is where they wish to live, without having to migrate. If possible, they "stick to their roots" (*beru bittidane*) here. In the Kannada film, *Daughter of the Soil*, the inhabitants of a village are forced to leave it because of drought. The heroine, played by Jayanthi, is in tears as she prepares to leave for Bangalore; sad violin music is heard in the background as she picks up a handful of the earth and cries, eyes turned heavenward, "O goddess of the soil, although I'm your daughter, I have failed you. Forgive me! Forgive me! I will come back." (And she does eventually return).

This feeling applies only to the village, not to the native region. If the rural micro-regional system has any geographical identity of its own, if it really exists in a socio-economic light, it is not in the minds of the people — so much so that attachment to the village easily becomes



Graph n° 5: Urban growth and demographic growth of the studied villages in Mandya district

parochialism. The two neighbouring villages of Mayagonahalli and Naragalu cordially hate each other, although (or because) some fields which are located in one village belong to inhabitants of the other, and natural economic interests, if nothing else, might have been expected to forge closer ties. As the marriage maps (maps 8 and 9) indicate, there are very few matrimonial alliances between the two villages, undoubtedly because of some old rivalry, which has only been exacerbated by the growth of what is controversially known as Mayagonahalli Gate. "Mayagonahalli? Rubbish!" claim the inhabitants of Naragalu. "All the commercial activities, the bus stop, the high school²², are located on Naragalu territory, while Mayagonahalli enjoys the prestige, the economic and political power attached. What do we stand to gain?" In 1989, the police had to forcibly intervene to disperse a large number of rioters who had gathered to pull down the boards of the Gate that read 'Mayagonahalli'. A marriage alliance between the two villages had to be concluded under the watchful eyes

22. This private high-school, created in 1984, is attended by 135 pupils in standards 8 to 10, 40 of whom are girls.

of the sub-inspector of police at the local police station. The village is thus a living entity, with well-defined social boundaries.²³

This is an incentive to remain in the village, and increases the attraction it exerts upon its inhabitants. In fact, there exists a rural "pull" that has to be explained not only on the basis of socio-economic reasons, but also with due consideration to cultural causes related to mental attitudes.

The Legislator and the Creditor: economic and social reasons for staying back

This retention of the village population corresponds to local economic activities. In fact, the villages mentioned are far away enough from any town not to have become mere dormitories for commuters. Apart from a few Higher-Secondary students, not even one commuter travels to Nagamangala from Mayagonahalli and Naragalu. Mottahalli has about ten commuters to Mandya. Perhaps in the not too distant future, this irrigated village may find itself engulfed in the "rurban" belt around Mandya, although this would have less to do with landscape (the straggly line of settlements starting from Mandya stops at least 3 kms away from Mottahalli) than with the various functions and services, and the number of commuters. But the irrigated agriculture there is profitable enough to ensure that it does not become a "dormitory village" pure and simple.

The State does all it can to encourage the population to stay. The first step was to implement reforms to the landholding structure; but those undertaken in 1961 and even 1974 did not have much effect in this area, mainly because very few villagers possessed holdings beyond the authorised ceiling²⁴. Sivaram Gowda, a Vokkaliga from Mayagonahalli, owns 16 hectares of land, much more than the sanctioned ceiling, but only 2 hectares are in his own name; the rest are in the name of his wife, his sisters or his daughter. And to think that his

23. At religious festivals in Mayagonahalli, the drum-beaters belong to the Vokkaliga caste, whereas beating on leather is normally the task of Harijans and barbers, that is of low castes; but there are no Harijans in Mayagonahalli, and those of Naragalu refuse to participate in the festivities of the neighbouring village.

24. The prohibition of tenancy, a perverse consequence of the 1974 reform, has nevertheless undoubtedly done a little to stem the rural exodus. An out-migrant, or the father of an out-migrant, who is too old to cultivate his land himself, can no longer take recourse to tenant-farming or share-cropping. The options facing him are either to sell it, to give it away to a relative, or to take the risk of letting it out illegally, knowing full well that the tenant, armed with the law, may very well refuse to return it afterwards.

father had left him only 2 hectares;... but Sivarama is friendly with local politicians and has cleverly made use of his connections to acquire the 14 hectares of *darkhast* land.

These *darkhasts* were another attempt, launched in 1969 by the Karnataka Government, to modify the agrarian structure to benefit the poor — or that was the initial aim. Under this scheme, public land was sold at a low price to peasants owning less than 4 hectares of dry land. This was not carried out in Mottahalli; but almost all the villagers of Mayagonahalli and Naragalu possess at least half a hectare of *darkhast* land. And even though some of these lands are rocky, barren, uncultivable pasture-land, they play an important role in retaining the population, both for economic and for sentimental reasons, since the owners are proud of their lands.

Equally important are certain Central Government programmes which aim at providing on-the-spot jobs the villagers. Some of them, such as the *National Rural Employment Programme* for example, (now *Jawahar Rozgar Yojana*) provide only temporary work (construction of the Mayagonahalli school building, metalling roads...) with pay that includes food. The *Integrated Rural Development Programme* launched here in 1984 has a wider scope, aimed at diversifying the rural economy by creating job opportunities, mostly non-agricultural, within the village. Thus loans and subsidies have today made it possible for many households to own a she-buffalo (0.8 adult she-buffaloes per family at Mottahalli; 0.9 at Mayagonahalli and Naragalu) whose milk is brought to the local milk co-operative, which incidentally was set up by private initiative. Even though a she-buffalo does not yield more than 5 litres of milk per day, and the three villages do not own more than 37 cross-bred cows between them, milch-cattle husbandry still represents a not-inconsiderable source of income, since a litre of milk is sold for Rs 2.5 to 4.5.

It is only after taking into account all the various programmes aimed at developing coconut groves and sericulture (Karnataka falls under a World Bank Project) at Mayagonahalli and Naragalu, at encouraging the plantation of sugarcane and eucalyptus at Mottahalli, and more generally, all the guaranteed prices that support the sale of agricultural products, and all the input subsidies that turn Indian agriculture into partly assisted agriculture, that we would have some inkling of how many millions of rupees are pumped into rural Karnataka every year. This colossal sum of money, although sometimes embezzled and often wasted, is nonetheless a factor in retaining the village population. In addition to these programmes, which

aim at giving means of production to the farmers, there are others more focussed on immediate basic needs, the most important being the *Public Distribution System*. Basic supplies, mainly rice, oil and wheat, are sold to villagers at subsidized rates, and at even lower rates to the holders of a green ration-card reserved (theoretically!) for the most under-privileged. Even though the staple food of this region (*ragi*) cannot but rarely be obtained through this channel, and the quality and the quantity offered leave a lot to be desired, this scheme does represent a lifeline for the poorest villagers, and remains a significant factor in retaining the rural population, especially since such a scheme does not yet exist as such in the towns.²⁵

It is a fact that the Green Revolution, which we can see in action at Mottahalli, has increased the difference between those who possessed enough capital to profit from the potentialities of the new agriculture, and the rest, who have therefore become relatively poorer. And yet marginal land-owners remain in the village. As J.Harriss²⁶ noted in Tamil Nadu, Lenin's prediction that the modernization of agriculture would lead to proletarianization and then the disappearance of petty land-owners, has not been fulfilled in India. This is partly due to the efforts made by the Government, but also to the socio-economic networks that exist within the village — bonds of solidarity as much as of dependence and clientelism — all of which serve to attach (in every sense of the word) the peasant to his native village.

Thus credit for example, can be seen to imply two things, both important factors in population retention at Mottahalli: first, it can signify getting into debt, paying back with heavy interest, or advance salary money, all of which tie the debtor down to the village, since he cannot hope to leave without returning the money. But the word is nuanced and can equally mean easy credit: half a rupee or a *ragi*-ball that the rich farmer gifts to a passing beggar, or even to his poor neighbour in exchange for some future service. "In the village, one never starves to death" say the landless. "In towns, on the contrary, everything has to be paid for in cash, and at once!".

Also, to be under the protection of a patron may entail many fringe-benefits. The patron, in addition to granting credit, may also use his influence with the local authorities to have his "clients" given

25. D. Kermel-Torres underlines that the growth of rural exodus took place particularly in Africa and Latin America during the '50's, around the same time that India, through the Panchayat Raj, launched the first package of measures intended to benefit the rural areas. The chronological conjunction, we are sure, is not coincidental.

26. J. Harriss, *Capitalism and peasant farming*, Bombay, O.U.P., 1982, 358 p.

darkhast lands, to settle disputes in their favour (M.N. Srinivas, 1976), or even to get them temporary jobs near the village with a public works contractor, a not-insignificant resource especially at Mayagonahalli and Naragalu: a day doing roadwork earns Rs 15 for a man, and Rs 13 for a woman (without food), almost twice the normal agricultural salary. During the slack summer season, this could well be just the incentive needed to keep a man from going to try his luck in the city. But as yet another example of the peasant's stay-at-home mentality, if the work-site happens to be more than 2 kms away from the village, it is not the done thing to go and work there, unless a group go as a team. To go outside the village limits all alone to seek work is to behave like a beggar, and consequently brings shame to the village, and the peasant will always refuse to do it, somewhat like the impoverished aristocrats of the French "*Ancien Régime*" who preferred to starve rather than deviate from their rule (*déroger*) not to take up any industrial or commercial activities.

This throws a new light on the study of routes and destinations. The fact that all the inhabitants of the small village of Kuderu go to Mottahalli for work and to Mottahalli alone, can of course be explained by a need for security, for a signposted route, but also by the fact that this collective migration has become a tradition, or at least a social phenomenon that is recognized, accepted and "honoured" by the village community. On the other hand, if a migrant would go all by himself to Coimbatore, a place where no-one from his village has ever gone to look for work before, he would be considered not only reckless but also "abnormal", deviating from the norm, from the beaten track, and having consequently lost his *gaurava* (a Kannada term signifying self-respect as well as dignity or respect shown by others). Hence to go in a group to sweep the floors of a seedy restaurant in Bangalore would be preferable to digging an irrigation canal 6 kms away from the village. This has little to do with the so-called prestige attached to a city, and even less with sweeping up the remains of a meal which is considered "unclean" and beneath his dignity by a "caste Hindu"; it is simply because a collective migration is considered more respectable than any random individual migration.

So, it would be appropriate to consider the problem of migration and the possible alternatives to it from an anthropological standpoint, giving due weight to the mental attitudes of the people involved.

The people, their homes and their gods: Cultural reasons for remaining in the village

Many of the inhabitants of Mayagonahalli and Naragalu or of other villages in the zone where out-migration towards Mottahalli occurs, seem to be believers in the Javanese proverb quoted by A.H. Richmond²⁷: "To eat or to starve does not matter so long as we are together". Thus it has been proposed that although the centrifugal forces responsible for migration are generally based on economic reasons, the centripetal forces which retain people in the village are due to the structural characteristics of the society in which they live²⁸. In the previous pages we have seen that in the Maidan such an opposition would be exaggerated. But the reasons for remaining in the village cannot be fully explained without a structuralist approach to the situation of potential migrants who are prisoners of a social set-up defined by history.

We will not dwell upon the significance of land for the "caste farmers" such as the Vokkaligas: it is their daily life as well as their *dharma*. It is equally irrelevant to emphasise the joys of living in a village, of gathering every evening in the village square at Naragalu, or of chatting on a cool verandah. For, on the other hand, the so-called "city-lights" have little attraction. Of course, a young migrant to Bangalore might describe the life there as "great" (not because of the people, the shops or the buildings, but solely because one can earn money there); but, for most villagers the city has very little lure. Actually, most of them have very frugal needs and their daily life is characteristically spartan. One of the wealthiest land-owners in Mottahalli lives with his family of 13 members in one single large room, poorly illumined by a 40 watt bulb, eats squatting on the floor, either rice or ragi garnished with *saru*, a simple spicy sauce, and often without any vegetables to go with it.

Such "rusticity" is primarily responsible for the fact that the village population, quite content with the cinemas and other services found at Nagamangala and Mandya (a fifteen-minute bus-ride away²⁹) can spurn the riches offered by cities. Also there is a certain feeling of moral guilt, even amongst the most educated villagers, in going to the

27. A.H. Richmond, in A.H. Richmond, D. Kubat (ed.), *Internal Migration. The New World and the Third World*, London, Sage Publications, 1976, p. 114.

28. Ph. Bartle, op.cit., p.114.

29. The distances of the three villages from the nearest city are representative of the average situation observed in their respective taluks.

city. In India, still deeply puritan in its ways, the city is the place where one drinks and gambles. For the inhabitants of Mottahalli, Mysore city is equivalent to Sodom and Gomorrha (cf. M.N. Srinivas, 1976, p.113). The fact that "civilisation" (*nagarikatte*) has the same root as "city" (*nagara*) is only an etymological phenomenon. The villagers refuse to accept it, because for them the only life that makes sense is one that revolves around the village.

This moral doctrine comes from Hinduism interpreted in a puritan fashion. But religion is also a key-factor in keeping people in the villages, also because of food-taboos. For example, one Achari from Mottahalli worked for a week during the off-season in a carpenter's work-shop at Mysore. He used to earn Rs 20 per day, which was good, "but he had to eat out at a tea-shop". In fact, because of caste regulations which for example, forbid a Vokkaliga to eat food prepared by a Harijan, nothing is considered more contaminating than food. If we add to this the dubious hygiene practised in small restaurants, and the rumours going the rounds of food-poisoning by Lingayats, it is easy to see that for reasons of religious purity as well as hygienic ones, the only food that can be trusted is food prepared at home by one's mother or one's wife.

Another way in which religion ties the villager down to his land is through his household deities: when a newly-built house is inaugurated, a ceremonial *pūja* is performed by a priest, who offers flowers to the seven deities of the weekdays; next, the house-owner scatters some rice in the four corners of the house in the name of the deities; he also offers some rice to Surya, the sun-god, and hammers three nails into the threshold of the house, on which coconuts are broken, and makes offerings of fire and milk. In the evening, almost everyone in the village will be invited to a sumptuous vegetarian feast. The house which the peasant has dedicated to the gods is thus placed under their protection. The images of the gods in the walls corroborate this fact. To migrate, leaving everything behind, would not be without a wrench.

Although the home is the principal emotional tie that binds him to the village, there are in fact four places, sometimes different, sometimes the same, to which the peasant attaches considerable sentimental value. The first is his place of birth: this is of the least consequence when it is not the village where he has spent his childhood; that is to say, when the mother, like many Indian women, has gone to her parent's home for the delivery. The second is the place where he has passed most of his life. The third is the ancestral home of his parents or the grand-parents, which need not necessarily be the same as the second if there has been a

migration. The fourth and last is the place where the *mane devaru*, the "household deity" lives. Each lineage is protected by a particular deity or pair of tutelary deities who are regularly worshipped. The place where the *mane devaru* is worshipped also marks the geographical origin of the founders of the lineage, the place they left, often several centuries ago, in order to found the present village. Thus at Mottahalli, the goddess *mane devaru* of the Tundageriamma lineage is found at Belakavadi, a hundred kilometres from Mottahalli. To cite another example, Siddappa, son of a migrant originally from Mayagonahalli, was born at Bhadravali where his father, whose profession he later took up, was a blacksmith; but his *mane devaru*, Kalabairava (Shiva), is at Adichinchungiri, some 30 kms away from Mayagonahalli. Thus Mayagonahalli, Bhadravati and Adichinchungiri constitute three different places to which Siddappa is emotionally attached, places where religion is mingled with economics and emotion.

These bonds are of course flexible, and do not always prevent migration. But a significant factor to be noted is that the migrants of Mayagonahalli and Naragalu prefer to return to their native place to celebrate the local festivals in honour of their village deity, rather than take part in big national festivals such as Sankranti (Pongal) or Dipavali. It is in the village that all one's ancestors are buried (rather than cremated). It is also in the village that the *devva* reside, good and bad spirits that have to be propitiated if one does not wish to call their wrath down upon one's head. Thus a whole religious and mythological geography is inscribed in the minds of the villagers, which only a few young graduates, with fluorescent scarves and heads buzzing with "modern" ideas borrowed from the West, profess to disdain.

It is true that all these generalisations do not take into account the specific details of individual cases. J. Wolpert (1965) was one of the first to point out how far migration was influenced by the three following factors: the attraction exerted by the target place of migration of course; but also the information available about it (and this cannot but be subjective); and the individual characteristics of a person. Structural analysis has its limitations and cannot make individuals rational, since all human beings are subject to passion. Thus, one farmer for whom remaining in the village seemed to make sense migrates, while another who had nothing to keep him at home, stays. Nanjappa, a Vokkaliga from Naragalu, is one of these. On his tiny 0.4 ha of land, he tries to eke out a living for himself, his wife and his two sons, one of whom is already an adult. He has no equipment but two bullocks too young to pull a plough (which in any case he does not possess). He has no other livestock, not even a goat: "the house is too small". All the members of

the family labour as agricultural workers or on various construction sites. But despite his obvious extreme poverty, he has never migrated, even though he has relatives in Ooty and Bombay. "I can neither read nor write," he says. But surely his relatives in the city would have been able to help him ? "I have my land here". The eldest son has a high-school education. Couldn't he have gone ? "Yes, but I'm getting old. How can I cultivate the land by myself ? " But Nanjappa has a brother named Giriappa at Naragalu who owns only 0.5 ha of land. Couldn't he have turned to him for help ? "It did not happen". And Giriappa, why did he not leave ? "Because if he left, the neighbours would think that he was afraid of not being able to put together enough money to marry off his four daughters". Pride and fear combine to prevent migration. This farmer, born poor, used to a life of wretched poverty, psychologically crushed by his miserable existence, is too weak to try and rise above it.

Such an instance calls to mind the three aspects of the decision to remain at home defined by R.J.Pryor (1975, p.12). A peasant who does not migrate might have reached one of three different conclusions: either, "I'm going to stay here now, but later I might leave".— the non-committal position of villagers who are on the lookout for the right occasion to out-migrate (a job procured for them by a friend already working in the target place); or, "I will stay here. Nothing has happened to make me seriously think of leaving"; or lastly, and this is the case with Nanjappa, "I'm definitely staying here and will never leave." Different reasonings can thus explain the same process of remaining at home.

Is Emigration too much of a wrench?

It is only too easy to label Nanjappa cowardly. But it is important to bear in mind the tragic nature of the decision to migrate, to leave the village and the people one loves for the unknown, for a large city or an irrigated village. Of course there is a certain prestige attached to working in a metropolitan city like Bangalore, but we have already seen how little this is favoured when weighed against the general attitude towards city life. Perhaps some migrants have a tendency to boast, to paint a pretty picture of their life there, but our research has not revealed any such thing. On the contrary, many migrants have a sordid tale to tell, and their mothers, wives, sons and daughters find it difficult to accept their prolonged absence stoically. "It is fate, he has left... When the cattle goes to the forest, it does not know whether it will find land to graze and water to drink. But it goes... What can I do even if I'm bored? He had to go since there is no irrigation here." A farmer from

Naragalu, whose family has never faced any form of migration, even goes to the extent of saying : "At Bombay, there is only one place for the likes of us — the gutter! There are only gutters in that city. It is better to remain here with two goats and one's plough and to plant coconut trees. Those who leave, begin regretting their decision within two days. They do not know anybody, but they want to go to Bombay! Here one can live with one's family, whereas there one is left to rot alone in the gutter."

Thus the main factor in staying put is perhaps the psychological cost of emigration, the harsh reality which hits the migrants when they find themselves in the city, "naked amidst the scorn of strangers upon whom they see the rich clothing, the brocades of continuity..."³⁰ And Tammaiah adds : "In Bombay all the immigrants from Karnataka are jeeringly called "Madrasi". We are only country bumpkins from the South. And some Marathis behave with us like *kirukula* (torturers)".

Migration is a rupture, but it is neither open nor total rupture. Food in the town is different from in the village, even in Bangalore; but to break the monotony of rice and *idli*, the migrants sometimes get together with friends or neighbours from the village in order to eat ragi balls just like at home. The case of the barber shows there is no complete break: when marriages are celebrated in Karnataka, the barber traditionally plays the *shenai* (a wind instrument) during the nuptials. As a fine example of continuity, the barber from Mayagonahalli and Naragalu follows the migrants as far as Bhadravati to celebrate the marriages of natives of the villages. On the other hand, traditionally, after having had his hair trimmed by the barber (according to Hinduism, it is a very polluting task), the villager should wash himself thoroughly as soon as he returns home. But his house will be contaminated if he enters it directly: so, while he is still on the threshold, he has a pitcher of water brought to him from the interior of the house (which he cannot touch owing to his "unclean" state); water with a few drops of cow-urine or cowdung is sprayed over him three times before he is finally sufficiently cleansed and ready to enter his house to take his bath. But migrants to the city no longer follow these rituals : they enter their urban homes directly in order to bathe, without the preliminary triple water purification. In the city, the house is more "immune" to pollution than in the village. Thus it is quite possible to cook meat in the kitchen, whereas in the village non-vegetarian food has to be prepared outside or in a special room. But when the migrant returns home to the village, he once again adheres to the customs and rituals of purification, such as waiting on the threshold after a hair-cut or cooking non-vegetarian food

30. S. Rushdie: *Shame*, London, Picador, 1984, p.63-4.

outside the house. There is no trace of contradiction or hypocrisy in his mind. It is not fear of gossip alone that is responsible for this change in behaviour; for him, village and city are two distinct places, with two rites, two rules. By such a geographical determination, it is possible to distinguish two kinds of rituals co-existing within the same religion, within the same society, with constant intermixing between the two, and no pangs of guilt or painful rupture. Such flexibility makes it easier for the migrant to continue with the village way of life if he returns permanently to Mayagonahalli or Naragalu.

There are cases of migrants returning definitively to the village even when we might expect them to have felt like strangers there. Chame Gowda, for example, works as a night watchman in the Education Department in Bangalore. He is 42 years old and earns 1200 rupees per month, which is quite sufficient to meet the needs of his family, namely his wife and child. For somebody who studied only as far as Standard VII, he is quite happy with his lot in life. What could possibly link him to Naragalu? He was not even born there, for his father was a migrant at the time when Chame Gowda was born in Ooty. His life has been spent mostly in towns: Ooty for the first 23 years, then Bangalore... And yet Chame plans to return to Naragalu after retirement, to breath his last on the soil of his ancestors.³¹

Migration does not always lead to heart-break. As the rupture with the native village is never final, there are several home-comings. It also enables a large part of the rural population to remain in the villages, though at Mayagonahalli and Naragalu the migratory balance is negative. This is all the more important because this flexibility allows room for various possible developments. Mottahalli, a place of out-migration till the 1940's, now takes in a significant number of seasonal workers and was until recently a goal of permanent in-migrations. It would be worthwhile to pay attention to the future irrigation of the nearby villages by the Hemavathi project, as this might create seasonal movements from Mayagonahalli and Naragalu, which have never experienced such a type of migration. Even though an increase in the cultivation of coconut trees and sericulture might not succeed in completely stopping the flow of migration towards Bangalore, Ooty or Bombay (which is doubtful, considering the rigidity of the network and the importance accorded to tradition), at least it might serve to retain more of the population in the village.

31. As a matter of fact, Chame is already preparing the ground for eventually settling in the village by maintaining close contact with his family there. He visits Naragalu every month with Rs 300 or 400 for his father (who returned to the village in his old age), and takes back to Bangalore his share of the grains, which is one fourth of the harvest since he has two other brothers.

Nonetheless only a part of the population can be expected to remain in the village. It does not seem possible for the Maidan to develop differently from the rest of India in the near future: a slow but steady decline in the percentage of rural as compared to urban population. However, the likelihood of a rural exodus comparable in its intensity to that of South America can also be ruled out: it is not possible to wipe out with a single stroke two thousand years of agrarian civilisation.

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"Migrer ou pas?": Etude de deux systèmes ruraux dans le Maidan du Karnataka méridional (Inde)

Dans une Inde encore aux 3/4 rurale, la relative faiblesse des migrations vers la ville doit assurément être mise en relation avec le développement de l'agriculture, et notamment l'irrigation. C'est dans cette perspective qu'ont été étudiés trois villages du Karnataka méridional, l'un irrigué et les deux autres pas. Le premier, Mottahalli, bénéficie d'une irrigation par canal qui permet sur les meilleures terres deux récoltes de riz par an, ainsi que de la canne à sucre; comme en outre celle-ci est transformée en jaggery dans des crushers au village-même, la productivité de l'agriculture a induit une double immigration, permanente et saisonnière, fondée sur un système d'avance sur salaires théoriquement illégal. (L'émigration à partir de ce village est, elle, limitée à quelques individus disposant de capital ou de diplômes).

Dans les villages non irrigués au contraire, l'essor des cocoteraies et des puits n'empêche pas la nécessité, depuis les années 1940, d'une émigration procurant des revenus d'appoint. Mais ces flux ne sont jamais tournés vers la campagne irriguée pourtant proche: nos deux villages privilégient la ville et ses emplois peu qualifiés. Ils ne sont donc pas l'envers exact de Mottahalli. C'est là l'influence d'un souci sécuritaire et de l'obligation de ne suivre que des circuits migratoires (économiques aussi bien que géographiques) déjà reconnus par le village; de même que Mottahalli n'accueille d'immigrés que provenant de certains villages non irrigués bien spécifiques.

Cette mobilité ne doit cependant pas cacher la prégnance de l'enracinement villageois: on ne part qu'à contrecoeur, sans rêver à de prétendues "lumières de la ville", et les retours sont nombreux, même après plusieurs années passées à Bangalore ou Bombay, alors que les gains épargnés demeurent très limités. A coup sûr les facteurs socio-culturels ont autant d'importance que les facteurs économiques dans les phénomènes migratoires.

Mots-clés : Canne à sucre, Enracinement, Karnataka, Logiques paysannes,
Migrations, Terres sèches, Terres irriguées

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